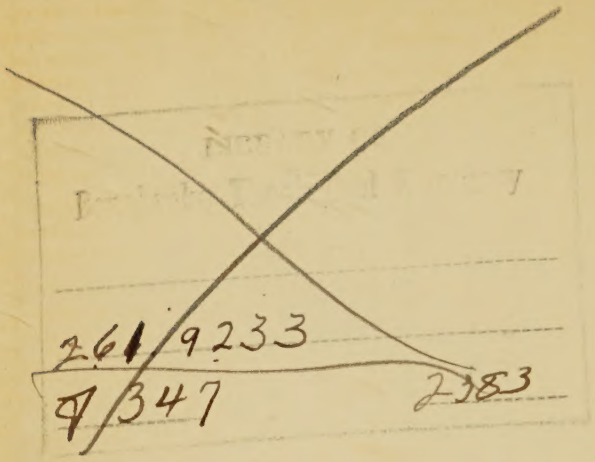
OUR TEMPLED HILLS

RALPH A. FELTON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Our Templed Hills

A Study of the Church and Rural Life

By Ralph A. Felton

Author of: *Serving the Neighborhood, A Christian in the Countryside, The Study of a Rural Parish,* etc.

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1926

Council of Women for Home Missions
and
Missionary Education Movement
New York

Ralph A. Felton, author of *Our Templed Hills*, grew up on a farm. He is a graduate of Southwestern College, Winfield, Kansas, and of Union Theological Seminary, New York, and he has done postgraduate work at Columbia and at the University of Pennsylvania. For six years Mr. Felton served in the Department of Church and Country Life of the Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., and he was for five years Educational Director of the Department of Rural Work of the Board of Home Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church. During this time he had charge of a series of summer schools for town and country pastors which had a combined attendance of over five thousand. He has also charge of rural surveys, and has helped in establishing demonstration churches. For the past three years Mr. Felton has been Extension Professor of Rural Social Organization at the New York State College of Agriculture, Cornell University. This assignment has included visiting rural communities and helping with many and various community projects.

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To the one who taught me
to love the rural church
My Mother

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FOREWORD

The rural church in the past has been near to our nation's heart. Each settlement in pioneer days was built around this little edifice. Our history, our poetry, our nation's ideals are all rich with its memories. The writer of our patriotic hymn, "America," pictured a temple on every hill, and we still sing, "I love thy rocks and rills, thy woods and templed hills."

About fifteen years ago we began to hear much about the decline of the rural church. Many of us were unwilling to believe such reports. We questioned the truth of the surveys and we said unkind things about those who brought us such facts. But the facts continued to bother us.

During these last fifteen years changes in rural life have taken place more rapidly than ever before. These changes which affect the rural church have forced upon us a thorough study of the situation. We must enter this study hopefully. The rural church must win out.

The day is coming, we believe, when every hill and valley will re-echo the music of the church bell; when every field and farm will feel the touch of Christian husbandmen; when the farm markets will be peopled by men who do justice and love mercy; when every highway shall lead to a place of worship; when men's hearts will be full of love for their neighbors; when children will be taught righteousness by devoted and trained teachers; when the nation will recognize the value of the rural church to our national idealism; when

ministers will be proud to serve rural parishes; when those who worship in city centers will seek the companionship of rural folk because of their real worth.

In order to bring the rural church to its rightful place of leadership in the nation, we must prayerfully study its problems and prepare ourselves for its program.

RALPH A. FELTON

ITHACA, NEW YORK
February 8
1926

Our Templed Hills

I

THE NEW RURAL LIFE

"The country church is getting to be quite a problem."

This is the way the man who was taking me to his rural church one evening began his conversation.

"What's the matter with it?" I asked.

"Don't you know?" he questioned. "Everybody is talking about it. Well, it's just this, the farmers don't come to church any more. There was a time when all the folks around here came. The church was what you might call a 'social center,' you know what I mean."

As we drove through that fertile farming district, there was in my mind a vivid picture of a meeting from which I had just come, a meeting held in a beautiful little village church, one of those charming tall-spired, colonial buildings surrounded by a well-kept lawn and hallowed by sacred memories extending back seventy-five years or more. The congregation of this church were clinging tenaciously to the past. They had just rejected unanimously a proposal from their pastor to conduct a daily vacation church school. They had voted against the every member canvass. They did not want graded lessons, because they had become used to the old, uniform system. Thus they had voted down the pastor's proposed modern church program.

After a moment, turning to my host, I asked his occupation.

"I'm a rural mail carrier," he explained. "Been on the same route for fourteen years."

"Have you seen any change in the farmers' mail in those fourteen years?" I asked.

"Change! You should have seen the little packet of letters I used to carry! Just a few letters with a strap around them, except on Friday when the local paper came out. But now! On my route there are 130 farm families, and 128 of them take dailies. I carry between three and four hundred farm journals every week. One man takes seven agricultural papers. Oh, these farmers of ours are up to date!"

The meeting I attended that evening at the mail carrier's church was a union service, the second union meeting held in ten years. There were in all fifty-six persons present. After the meeting had adjourned, I asked the Presbyterian pastor how his church was getting along.

"I get awfully discouraged," he said. "We have the best people in town, but we have so few of them."

"What services do you have during the week?" I asked.

"Just preaching, Sunday morning and evening, and I'm thinking of giving up the evening service; so few attend any more."

When I asked the Baptist preacher about the progress of his church, he admitted that he was looking for another field.

"I want to go West," he said, "where people are more progressive. I think I'll go to Oregon next year."

The Methodist minister blamed his lack of success on the farmers.

"They are nothing but slaves," he began. "They sell their produce for whatever price people are willing to pay, and they pay whatever prices are asked for the things they buy. I told them in my sermon last Sunday that they needed to organize."

"Were any of them there to hear you?" I asked.

"No, not many," he admitted. "You can't get them out."

"In which one of your three churches would you have them meet to organize?" I inquired.

"Not in a church at all, but in the Grange," he said.

"If you belong to the Grange, perhaps you could arrange for such a meeting," I suggested.

"No," he confessed, "I haven't joined the Grange yet."

Is there anything the matter with the church in this small village? It is a place of only four hundred people, but it has three churches. Out of the fifty-six persons present, at this second union meeting of these churches in ten years, only two were farmers. The farmers who do not come to church are reading daily papers and keeping up to date in agricultural development. Seven big farm cooperatives are functioning in this state.

During the same week that this union meeting of three churches was held and which two farmers attended, another meeting was held in the same village at which cooperative marketing was discussed, and a hundred farmers were present.

Is it not possible that the people in the first village

visited, who rejected the pastor's modern program, are largely responsible for the feeling among progressive farmers that the church is "behind the times"? Is it not probable that if the three churches in the second village would cooperate on a big unified community program, the farmers who do not now attend church would return to it and stand by it loyally?

There are those who see the condition of the rural church today and who feel that the solution of the problem is in going back and reviving old customs rather than in trying to bring the church up to date with the other institutions of rural life. Before deciding that we ought to go back to "the good old days," let us, in imagination, go back a hundred years and visit a typical rural neighborhood.

We are surprised to find "bound boys" working on farms. Here is an entry in a diary dated September 24, 1824:

"This day I took Samuel P. Hopkins, eleven years of age the tenth of next October, to work until he is twenty-one years of age, viz., until the tenth day of October, 1834, for which I have to clothe, school, and give him one hundred dollars at the expiration of said time if he performs on his part. Signed, William Garbutt."

It would not be hard to imagine that this boy went to church each Sunday, regularly. He certainly did if Mr. Garbutt asked him to go. Even though the creed of the church may have been rigid and the minister may have been exacting, it was nothing more than the boy was accustomed to in all matters pertaining to his life.

Do we want to go back to these customs?

Another entry in this same diary reads as follows: "May 1, 1827. Rufus Johnson began work for twelve months, for which I have to give him the use of house and garden, twenty bushels of wheat, twenty bushels of corn, ten bushels of potatoes, and twenty pounds of common wool, and twenty dollars in cash."

Those were the days of barter, when people exchanged goods instead of paying cash. I wonder if this does not explain why ministers' cash salaries were at that time so low. Perhaps you know of a rural community where they still cling to the old custom of giving a minister "presents" instead of paying him a full cash salary as other people are now paid. Would we be willing to return to the day of such barter? Are we not conducting a more self-respecting institution in a church organized on the business basis that prevails today?

We read in another old family account book dated March 15, 1835: "Last winter's store bill was $8.95." Any church which tries to keep its expenditures upon the level prevailing in 1835 is certain to fail, for our whole scheme of economics has changed.

In these modern days of trucks and tractors, it seems strange to read an account like the following, dated June 5, 1816:

"Finished plowing the field by the barn. Let oxen rest two days; their feet very sore."

At the time these entries were written, and when most of our present parishes were being laid out and our rural churches built, transportation was much slower than it is now. A church was needed for each

small neighborhood; and the worse the roads were, the smaller the neighborhood. But nowadays, with improved methods of transportation, communities are larger, consequently parishes may be proportionately greater in extent.

In an old paper dated 1838 we read an account of how the church officials in a certain Ohio village looked upon some of the questions of progress in those days.

A group of young men were conducting a debating society in the church, which was also used as the schoolhouse. The question was proposed for debate; *Resolved,* That railroads and telegraphs will some day be used throughout the country." The members of the school board, who were also the officials of the church, sent the following letter to those "mistaken though well-meaning youths."

"You are welcome to the use of the schoolhouse to debate all proper questions in, but such things as railroads and telegraphs are impossibilities and rank infidelity. There is no work of God about them. If God had designed that his intelligent creatures should travel at the frightful speed of fifteen miles an hour by steam, he would clearly have foretold it through his holy prophets. It is the device of Satan to lead immortal souls down to hell."

Back in 1815 we learn that a certain church "was built for $164." Lumber was cheap and labor was plentiful. Any group of dissenters could build a church. The need for comity agreements between denominations to divide their territory did not then seem so important. Neighborhoods were small and churches were built close together. The pioneer type of mind

had an individualistic religion, and there seemed little thought of cooperation on the part of church people.

In 1860 in a small Eastern village where there were already a Presbyterian, a Methodist, and an Episcopal church, a fourth, the Methodist Protestant, was organized. Dr. Brunner has discovered in the old files of the village paper the following account of the organization of that Methodist Protestant church written by one of its members.[1]

"I was working in the shop when our first minister came around, introduced himself, and told me what kind of a church he was thinking of starting. I thought it would be a good plan, and told him I would join. The Methodist Episcopal church at that time was run by a clique, mostly lawyers. The working people in that church could go to sermons, but otherwise they took little part and felt no responsibility toward the church. The Methodist Protestant is more democratic and friendly. We had our first meeting in a storehouse and three people joined. Then we had a revival. Some people from the Methodist Episcopal church joined, but mostly those who had not been members at all. The greater part of our members live on this side of the track."

It was in this way, in hundreds of other small communities, that a fourth or a fifth church was built and organized where now only one is needed. But are our rural churches keeping pace with our new rural life? This is the question before us. Let us study the recent changes in rural life and see what adjust-

[1] Quoted from a forthcoming study of the American Agricultural Village by the Institute of Social and Religious Research. Edmund deS. Brunner, Director.

ments the church might well make in consideration of the smaller number of people now living in the country.

THE EFFECT OF MACHINERY ON RURAL LIFE

"When my father was a boy there were seven families living on this two-hundred-acre farm," said a man in Delaware County, New York. "Now I am farming it alone. When my father went to the country school here, there were usually about forty pupils. The number had dropped down to twenty when I was in school. Now there are only seven. When I was young, our Methodist and Presbyterian churches had plenty of people. Last Sunday we had twenty-six at our Methodist Sunday school. It seems to me that it is about time to consolidate our one-district schools and to unite our two churches."

The decrease in the rural population as the result of the improvement in farm machinery is one of the principal factors in the rural church situation today, for fewer people are needed to raise the necessary food supply, and those who are not needed move to the city.

The extent to which farmers are using improved machinery and its economic value is apparent from the following: One man alone can nowadays farm twelve times as much land as his grandfather did one hundred years ago. Today there are 370,000 trucks and 450,000 tractors owned by farmers.[2] The truck gets the farm produce to the market in about one third of the time required by the horse and wagon of former

[2] Estimate by U. S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Public Roads.

days. Three fourths of the milk sold is delivered to the stations by trucks. In Connecticut it is estimated that ninety per cent of all farm produce is hauled by truck, and in California, seventy-five per cent. Within a fifty-mile zone around Indianapolis ninety per cent of the hogs sold are hauled by truck.[3] Think of the time thus saved to the farmer and the enlargement of his market area! Moreover, modern machinery saves expense. It costs thirty cents a ton-mile to haul wheat with horses and wagons, and only fifteen cents with motor trucks.[4]

In a study of 70,000 farmers, made by a big co-operative association in the East,[5] it is reported that two out of every three farmers have one or more silos. One seventh of these farms are on electric-power lines. One half of the farmers use gasoline engines to saw their wood, grind their feed, and pump their water. A third of them milk their cows by machinery, and a third do not even carry water into the house, but pump it in with engines or use gravity systems.

The number of tractors in one state (Kansas) increased from 2,493 in 1915 to 25,019 in 1924—an increase of 1,000 per cent. In Kansas in 1917, there were practically no combined harvester-threshers, machines which cut and thresh the wheat all in one operation. In 1924 there were 3,116 of these machines on Kansas farms.[6]

Fifty years ago in the Middle West you could see

[3] Data from Robert E. Browne, U. S. Bureau of Public Roads, August, 1924, issue of Public Roads.

[4] A. J. Brousseau: "Highway Transportation and the Farmer." Published by the National Automobile Chamber of Commerce.

[5] Dairymen's League Cooperative Association.

[6] Data from W. E. Grimes, Kansas State Agricultural College.

one horse hitched to a harrow and the man walking. Ten years later the man drove two horses. After another decade this same man drove three horses and rode on the harrow. Still later he might be seen driving six horses. And now he is using a tractor.

We see, then, that a "new rural life" has developed—the result of improved farm machinery. Where one hundred years ago nine tenths of our population lived on farms, now only one quarter remains. And with the departure of each family, the country church has grown more nearly empty.

But although there are fewer people in the open country, motor power has united the farms and the people as they never were united in the past. Motor power is largely responsible for uniting the country schools. What kind of power will unite the country churches?

THE AUTOMOBILE AND THE RURAL CHURCH

Another factor in the new rural life that is affecting the rural church is the automobile. A community recently held a meeting at a farm home to consider organizing a community club.

"Why should we go to all the trouble of having a club out here?" commented one woman. "We can get into our car and go to the movies in town in fifteen minutes."

"But we have no car," said the timid wife of a tenant farmer. "We have nothing all the year, except Christmas."

These two families represent the problems which the automobile has suddenly brought into rural life. Two

farmers out of three own automobiles and can go away to a city church or go visiting or perhaps go on a picnic. The automobile does not keep people away from an interesting church, but it gives them an additional excuse for staying away from their home church if they are not interested in it. It simply offers a new challenge to the rural church.[7]

We in the church are likely to condemn new movements in rural life instead of trying to adapt the church to the constant changes. We are told that when "top buggies" were first used, they were condemned because the young folks went out riding Sunday evenings instead of coming to church. Horsemen, horseshoe manufacturers, harness and saddlery interests, and hay and grain associations have recently joined forces and organized "The Horse Association of America," an organization which is endeavoring to bring the horse back into common use. Like a little neighborhood church which is resisting the trend of the times, this horse association is fighting a losing battle.[8]

Changes in rural life are taking place so rapidly

[7] By rural church we mean the church in the open country and in the small village, including villages with a population of 2,500 and less.

[8] Six typical New York counties were selected by the State Department of Highways, and for two days during the month of August the traffic was studied on certain roads. For the years 1909, 1916, 1919, 1920, and 1922, the number of horses on the roads was as follows: 1,074, 903, 437, 339, 164. Only 16 per cent of the number of horses traveled over the roads in 1922 as in 1909. During these years, the motor vehicles passing the same six points in these counties increased in number as follows: 459, 1,904, 4,039, 8,073, 10,854—an increase of 2,400 per cent. That is, horses decreased to 16 per cent while automobiles increased 2,400 per cent.

that the church, which naturally moves slowly, can hardly keep pace with them in readjusting itself. The number of cars used in rural districts has doubled in the last five years, so that today the farmers possess more than four million cars.[9] Add to this number the automobiles owned by people in the rural villages and the total is doubled. Nine out of ten of the automobiles and motor trucks in the world are used in the United States.[10]

The coming of the automobile has brought with it the improved road. Ten miles to church on a state road in a car is easier to travel than two miles on a muddy road with a horse and buggy. Road improvement makes large communities, and therefore the church parishes should be larger. The total expenditure for county and state roads for the year 1925 was over a billion dollars.

Our present concern is the fact that the automobile and the improved road affect rural life in America. Before condemning the automobile too much, let us recognize the fact that it can take people to church as well as keep them away from it. It can enlarge a parish and make possible the reaching of a greater number of people.

In reply to a questionnaire sent to 10,000 doctors, over a fifth stated that their efficiency was doubled by their automobiles and a similar number had, with the help of their cars, made a fifty per cent gain. One doctor in Missouri said, "We can now do twice the work in half the time."

Why should not the automobile help the rural min-

[9] Estimate of United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Public Roads.

[10] Data from the National Automobile Chamber of Commerce.

ister or the home missionary to double the efficiency of his work likewise? A church official recently told of a day he had spent visiting churches in a Missouri district with the leader of his laymen's activities.

"We traveled 110 miles, visiting representative laymen of the district, and were gone seven hours," he said. "After coming home that night, I read a few pages in John Wesley's journals," he continued, "and I came across Wesley's account of a day's work somewhat similar to ours. He had spent four and a half hours going only fifteen miles; we had covered seven times as much territory as he had." Would it be proper to inquire if every preacher today who has a car is doing seven times as much work as Wesley did?

In connection with this question it is fair, however, to ask whether every pastor has yet realized the advantages of the automobile to his church. Some have. One pastor whose church is in the open country uses two auto busses to bring the children living within a radius of seven miles to his daily vacation church school. The automobile is by no means hurting his church! It is making possible a daily vacation school of ninety-four pupils in a church out in the open country!

At a recent agricultural meeting I asked the people as they entered the room how far they had come.

"Fourteen miles," said the first.

"Ten miles," the second replied.

"I walked one mile and rode three miles on the trolley," said the third.

The next had come twelve miles, and the next fourteen.

If people can come from points as far away as this

to discuss sheep or chickens, why can they not come just as far to discuss religion or children, or to attend a county-wide training school in religious education? Our challenge is to make the church so worth while and so important that people will come as far to attend its meetings as they will to attend agricultural meetings.

WHY NOT A CHURCH COOPERATIVE?

If people work and play together, and buy and sell cooperatively, why should they worship competitively? Moreover, would it not probably be correct to say that religion affects our daily life only in so far as the country church keeps abreast with modern rural life?

While making a rural life survey in southeastern Ohio in 1912, I asked a farmer if he and his neighbors ever cooperated in selling their apples.

"The only way we cooperate," he replied, "is to beat the other fellow to the market. If I heard that my neighbor across the road there was going to haul a load of apples to town tomorrow, I'd get up before daylight and beat him to town and sell mine first."

In the dairy section of northeastern Ohio I asked three neighbors who were living near together why they did not cooperate in hauling their milk to the trolley station. The first said that he had never thought of that, and the second was sure the plan would not work.

"I must be sure to get my milk to the trolley on time," said the third. "Those other fellows might miss the train."

I put the same question to a man in Maryland. He replied, "I don't think such a plan would ever work."

In answer to the proposal that he haul his own milk and his neighbor's to market for one week and that his neighbor take it all on the following week, he said, "I don't think I'd want to do it. My week might come in the very busiest time of the year." It is not strange that an individualistic gospel appealed to these men and that they approved of competitive churches.

But let us see what has happened in the way of co-operative marketing during the last decade. Cooperative marketing has increased fivefold in the last ten years. Seventy-five per cent of the dried fruit and the citrus fruit is now being marketed cooperatively, and the same is true of fifty per cent of the tobacco. In one year recently, farmers marketed over two billion dollars' worth of produce cooperatively. Only a short time ago the tobacco market in the South was paralyzed; the "night-riders" destroyed the crops, burned hundreds of tobacco barns, and even caused some loss of life. But in 1920, cooperative marketing had replaced this turmoil and now a quarter of a million tobacco growers belong to the tobacco pool.

In 1920 there began a nation-wide development of agencies for selling apples cooperatively. In the same year cooperative cotton marketing began in the South, and a year later the American Cotton Growers Exchange was organized. The fact that twice as much cotton is grown in our southern states as is grown in all the rest of the world indicates the far-reaching influence of cooperation on the world's cotton market.

The sixteen hundred livestock shipping associations in the North Central states have nearly all been organized since 1916. It is claimed that over a million

dollars were saved in one year alone by the cooperative marketing of wool.

It was only in 1916 that the New York State Dairymen's League was started. At that time the present directors were walking between plow handles, milking cows, and pitching hay, far away from their present offices in New York City. Each sold his milk separately and went his own way. Now these same five men compose the executive committee of the Dairymen's League Cooperative Association, which has a membership of 56,000 farmers and does six million dollars' worth of business a month. There are 173 other cooperative milk-marketing associations in the United States, most of which are less than ten years old.

Half a million farmers sell their grain annually through the five thousand farmers' elevators. The six hundred million dollars' worth of grain they handle each year is an indication of the vast proportions to which cooperative marketing has come. In some states nearly all the chief crops are marketed to some extent cooperatively.

And this change has come about in the last decade. Verily, a new day is here! Cooperation, not competition, is the life of business. The farmers are now thinking cooperatively.

The time has come, therefore, when denominational competition in rural regions must cease. Men who work together and sell together must not worship apart in competitive sects. Broad-minded cooperating farmers will not worship much longer in small competitive churches. The new rural life demands cooperation among churches as well as in business.

COUNTY AGENT WORK

Farmers are organized on the county basis agriculturally, and on the neighborhood basis religiously.

Twenty years ago farmers went to the county-seat to attend the annual fair or perhaps to pay taxes, but only on such exceptional errands. The farmer's friends were in his home neighborhood. In fact a farm woman could sometimes spend a whole day in the county-seat without seeing a single person she knew. The district school, the neighborhood church, and often the farmers' club were local institutions only. But within the past ten years more than three fourths of the counties in the United States have been organized to deal with their agricultural and home-making problems on a county basis. Men and women extension agents have been employed to carry on this agricultural and home-economics work.

The growth of this larger unit in agricultural development has been marvelous. County-agent work began in the South only twenty years ago. In the North the first agricultural agent was employed in 1911, in Broome County, New York. By 1914, one third of the counties in the United States had agents, and in another five years the number had doubled.

The United States Department of Agriculture recently made a study of 3,954 farms in typical areas of New York, Iowa, Colorado, and California, and found that improved practises have been adopted as a result of agricultural extension work in seventy-four per cent of the farms in these areas. The effect of extension work has been enormous and far-reaching.

The same phenomenal growth is observed in the county-wide organization of boys' and girls' clubs in agriculture and home economics. The first boys' club in the South was organized in Holmes County, Mississippi, in 1907. Within three years many similar clubs were formed, and their enrolment included as many as 46,000, a figure which, five years later, jumped to 135,000. Girls' clubs grew even faster, increasing from 3,000 members in 1911 to 173,000 five years later.

Miss Grace E. Frysinger, National Field Agent of Cooperative Extension Work, Washington, D. C., tells us that 251,000 women are now acting in the capacity of home demonstrators in such projects as nutrition, food preservation, clothing, poultry, household management, child welfare, recreation, and community civics. In addition, 289,000 farm girls are engaged in junior club work.

Farm women have their community units, usually covering a township, but the county basis is observed as far as organization is concerned. This means that farm women are not only acquainted with women throughout the entire county, but they work with them throughout the year on such matters as nutrition, clothing, health, child welfare, and recreation.

A million farmers and another million farm women are today thinking of their work-day problems on a county-wide basis. They meet regularly at the county-seat for classes and discussion. They drive past their church and past half a dozen other churches to get to nearly every county meeting in which they discuss food, health, clothes, crops, markets, income, and child welfare—all vital subjects. The home church, therefore,

they are likely to say, is "weak," "uninteresting," "run by a few," "narrow," and "not what it used to be."

If the rural church in addition to its mission of preaching should adapt its organization and administration methods to those of the agricultural extension organization, we should find some such county program as the following.

In every county there would be a county federation of churches that would correspond to the county extension organization. The rural pastors of the county would spend at least a dozen evenings a year together discussing the latest experiments in rural-church administration. About four times each year there would be held at the county-seat an all-day institute for Sunday-school superintendents or teachers, similar to the schools for nutrition leaders or dairymen. All money appropriated by church mission boards to local churches would be for the purpose of carrying on certain demonstrations, just as the appropriations for agricultural work are used. We would not have one "demonstration parish" in a presbytery or district, but each rural church would be trying out at least one demonstration each year and reporting on it to the other churches. As farmers get together at the county-seat to discuss the new experiments or demonstrations to be tried each year, so would officials of local churches plan their several experiments. One church might try a full-time resident pastor; another could test the value of motion pictures or of a Delco lighting system; and still another might try the practicality of dramatizations and pageantry in religious education. In the same way that all dairy farmers in the county now meet to discuss cow

testing, so would all church treasurers in the county meet to discuss the best methods of putting on the every member canvass. Missionary societies would have regular training classes for teachers of mission study groups.

A plan such as this would mean, then, that the money appropriated for missions would be used to develop strong churches as demonstrations rather than to keep weak or competitive churches barely alive.

SCHOOL AND CHURCH CONSOLIDATION

"The uniting or federating of rural churches is their greatest need," said the president of a state farm bureau federation recently. Inasmuch as twenty-eight thousand farmers are members of the organization of which he is president, it seemed to me that he was qualified to discuss this subject of federation. This same man, a Presbyterian elder, has also been selected from among half a million farmers to be one of a dozen members of the executive committee of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

"Church federation is not a question of sectarianism, as many people believe," he continued. "It is a question of neighborhood tradition. We have our little churches and we don't know how to unite them. We are having just as hard a time consolidating our rural schools as our rural churches. Country people have only a few local institutions, and they hate to lose them. Tradition gathers around a school or a church and ties the neighbors to it, and the result is that they hate to give it up."

Let us see what is happening to the district schools. Fifty years ago, school consolidation was unheard of. Today forty per cent of the 11,000,000 pupils enrolled in our rural schools are in consolidated and village schools. In Indiana alone 2,000 one-room schools have been closed and consolidated schools take care of their pupils. In other states similar progress has been made in school consolidation. Ohio had 178 centralized schools in 1910, but within the next six years increased this number three hundred per cent.

In North Dakota, where school consolidation has been hindered because of the sparsity of the population, the number of consolidated schools increased 295 per cent in six years.[11] Sometimes we think that local loyalties and provincial traditions are more noticeable in the South. But school consolidation began in Louisiana in 1902 when a cyclone destroyed a one-room school building in Lafayette County, and during the next fifteen years the state built six hundred consolidated schools.

Preble County, Ohio, has consolidated more than two thirds of its small schools! Why have not the churches that are too small to exist alone likewise been consolidated instead of simply allowed to die?

Since rural people dislike giving up their little district school and their little neighborhood church for the same reasons, why is school consolidation progressing so much more rapidly than church consolidation? County school superintendents and state school supervisors are encouraging school consolidation. Someone should similarly urge consolidation of the churches.

11 Julius B. Arp: *Rural Education and the Consolidated School.*

RELATION OF THE RADIO TO RURAL LIFE

Another factor in the new rural life is the radio. One out of every twelve farmers had a radio set in 1925. The number owning radios has doubled every year for the last three years.[12] At this rate one third of the farm homes will be "radioized" in 1927. Farmers usually agree that as a general rule the radio will not interfere with church-going. The principal change the radio has made, however, is in the farmers' attitude. It has helped to remove his feeling of isolation and his individualism, and has brought to his home the news of the world and much needed entertainment. He hears music other than his own church choir, sermons other than those his pastor preaches—and he is very likely to make comparisons. This need not lessen his interest in his home church. It should rather make him seek to improve his local institutions.

Instead of condemning the radio as another enemy of the church, let us see how it is improving rural life.

"The radio fully equals the automobile in making country life more pleasant," says a county agent in South Carolina. "It gives the farmer who has always been limited by his circumstances infinite reach."

A farm leader in Comanche County, Texas, calls attention to the fact that the radio improves local institutions by developing the farmers themselves. "It is one of the greatest educational factors," he says, "in

[12] From a report issued September, 1925, by J. C. Gilbert, Specialist in Market News and Radio, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., based on a study of 1,056 counties.

the advancement of the farmers that we have today. It sows the seeds of desire for their own development."

Even in the Ozark Mountains we find many radio sets. The county agent at Huntsville, Arkansas, says, "There is no question but that the farmers are putting in receiving sets to a greater extent than town people in my county."

One of the greatest assets of this new service is in the marketing of farm produce. A man in Indiana eighteen miles from a railroad described the change thus:

"When I was young, two or three days were needed to dispose of a load of hogs. We took chances on what the market would be when the hogs reached the yards. Now I can learn from the radio what the market is and put my hogs on the city market in two or three hours, by truck."

Every elevator in Thayer County, Nebraska, receives its market reports by radio. The same may be said of most shippers of livestock.

An incident that happened recently in Colfax County, New Mexico, indicates the changed attitude which the radio has brought to rural people. It is reported that a farmer hauled a load of wheat to market but refused the price which the elevator man offered him. He had heard the market reports over the radio the night before, and had learned that wheat had taken a decided rise. He waited until the elevator man received notification of the advanced price and thus gained fifteen cents a bushel on his load.

Thus we see that the farmer has suddenly become a world citizen, informed daily of the world happenings,

equipped to hear the best music, the best lectures, or the best sermons. Is not this a challenge to all who are interested in the church not to neglect the rural church, not to think that any little church will do for farm folk, but rather to see to it that the rural church is made more efficient?

CHANGES IN RURAL STANDARDS OF LIVING

To illustrate the changes that have taken place in rural life, let us study the cost of living of two families. The first entries are those of the father who kept strict account of his expenditures; and the second, those of his son who, nearly fifty years later, kept an equally strict account. The families of both father and son lived successively on the same farm, and in each family there were three adults and three children. They may not be typical, but they illustrate the difference in the standard of living today on American farms from what it was fifty years ago.

Father's expenses, 1880		Son's expenses, 1924
$ 1.73	Light, including up-keep	$ 99.00
52.00	Food	447.73
93.68	Clothing	280.15
61.81	Three children	411.43
72.20	Church	95.07
6.40	Doctor and medicine	167.30
2.50	Papers and books	161.70
.00	Trips and vacations	22.26
.00	Amusements	27.65
14.96	General operation (coal, gasoline, auto, labor)	691.65
16.17	Miscellaneous	159.82
$321.45		$2,563.76

The father's family bought cloth by the yard, but the son's family bought ready-made clothes. The education of the son's children is costing over twice as much as the education of the father's children, due to the fact that teachers' salaries have nearly trebled. The father took two newspapers only; the son, during the year, bought, in addition to newspapers and magazines, a set of the Harvard Classics. The father's family light bill for the year included: nine gallons of kerosene, $1.08; six lamp chimneys, $.59; and one wick, $.06; a total of $1.73. The son spends two dollars a month for fuel for his Delco lighting system, and in addition to this the up-keep and depreciation amounts to $75 a year.

We are disappointed, however, when we compare these two accounts and pick out the one item in which there is the least change from 1880 to 1924.

Those of us who are interested in the rural church are convinced that somehow we must find a way to keep the church abreast of the times and in its rightful place of leadership.

FARMERS ALIVE TO NEED FOR LEADERS

"The country churches are well patronized in this county, but they don't wield a very heavy hand," said a county agricultural agent who is a faithful church worker as well as the manager of the largest county farm bureau in his state.

"The rural churches don't have great influence in my county," said a county agent in a rich dairy region. "They do not step out far enough. They don't branch

out. They don't show enough interest in present-day problems of rural life," he concluded.

"The decline of the country church is due not to the personnel of the ministry or to the laymen," said another farmer and church official. "It is due to changed conditions of farm life, to the good roads, to the automobiles, and especially to the use of improved machinery, which results in the fact that fewer people are needed in the country to till the land."

This same farmer, who has been honored by election to the presidency of his state farm bureau federation, added this significant suggestion: "I find that rural churches are taking a place of leadership in their districts wherever they are keeping up to date." He added: "Country ministers as a rule are much better than they used to be. Those ministers who join the Grange and the farm bureau, who read farm papers, and who keep interested in the farmers' problems, need not worry about their people failing to do anything they ask of them."

The million farm families who have recently united in the American Farm Bureau Federation are anxious for as great progress among their rural churches as among their economic institutions. Is it too much to ask of the entire church, in city, in town, and in country, to enter into a new rural church movement, the purpose of which shall be to make the church the center of the life of every rural community? This will mean many readjustments. It will mean resident pastors in larger parishes where now we have absentee preachers in divided parishes. It will mean many new applications of the gospel to present-day needs. But the burden of

Jesus' ministry was to apply his gospel to the needs of the people of his day. From the joyous home in Cana in the north to the sorrowing Bethany home in the south, our Lord was quick to see the needs of the people near at hand. He overthrew the tables in the temple and the traditional beliefs all about him in order to keep religion from being robbed of its life. His gospel today is still the abundant life.

In the succeeding chapters we shall think together about ways and means of keeping the rural church in the place of leadership which it deserves throughout all rural America.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Times in the country have changed. Instead of lamenting "the good old days," it were better for us to try to keep the rural church up to date.

Improved farm machinery means that fewer people are needed in the country; therefore, many go to the city. This means that there are fewer people left in the country to support the church; therefore, small churches should be consolidated.

Automobiles and good roads have enlarged the rural neighborhood, making it possible for farm people to attend strong central churches. As a rule such a church should be located at the trade center.

Cooperative marketing is increasing rapidly in rural America. This is giving farmers encouragement to cooperate in other things, including their church.

More than two thousand counties in the United States

have recently been organized for extension work in agriculture and home making. The county agricultural agent, the home economics agent, and the junior club leader, direct many county-wide projects. As a result, the farmers are thinking of their daily life in larger terms. The little neighborhood unit has largely given place to the county unit for their agricultural organizations. Scientific agriculture is generally accepted. The small neighborhood church must likewise be enlarged, both geographically and in its program of activities.

The consolidation of rural schools, although opposed by provincialism and meeting many obstacles, is, nevertheless, advancing rapidly. This movement is paving the way for a great consolidation of rural churches, first among near-by churches of the same faith, and later among different denominations.

The radio in recent years, like the telephone and the rural free delivery, has given country people a changed attitude, by decreasing their isolation and putting them in touch with world movements. This has tended to make them dissatisfied with a small, uninteresting church. A larger church organization, probably in the village or town, with a social program and modern religious education facilities is necessary.

The standard of living in farm homes has improved enormously. Family demands are increasing faster than incomes. All these changes mean readjustments. Religion in the countryside must be adapted to meet the needs of this new rural life.

WHEN THE CHURCH BECOMES THE CENTER OF RURAL LIFE, NOT ONLY GEOGRAPHICALLY BUT ALSO SOCIALLY AND SPIRITUALLY, THE PROBLEMS OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY WILL BE IMMENSELY SIMPLIFIED.

THE DEMONSTRATION IDEA (ABOVE) HAS TAKEN HOLD OF FARMERS. IF WE WOULD USE THE SAME IDEA IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, FARM BUREAU MEMBERS COULD NOT ACCUSE THE CHURCH OF BEING UNPROGRESSIVE. DEMONSTRATION AND COOPERATION ARE SEEN IN THE CLINIC (BELOW) THROUGH WHICH A COUNTY NURSE AND A CHURCH WORK TOGETHER TO GIVE MEDICAL EXAMINATION AND INSTRUCTION IN HOME NURSING.

NEARLY A MILLION BOYS AND GIRLS ARE ENROLLED IN AGRICULTURAL AND HOME-MAKING CLUBS. CHRISTIAN PEOPLE, LOOKING FOR A FIELD OF SERVICE, SHOULD BECOME LEADERS OF THESE CLUBS AND HELP TO KEEP THE BOYS AND GIRLS LOYAL TO THE CHURCH.

THE FARM BUREAU, HOME BUREAU, COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AGENT, COUNTY HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENT, AND JUNIOR CLUB AGENT ORGANIZE FARM PEOPLE ON A COUNTYWIDE BASIS. FARMERS, THEREFORE, ARE LIKELY TO THINK OF THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD CHURCH AS BEHIND-THE-TIMES, ESPECIALLY IF ONE CHURCH COMPETES WITH ANOTHER ACROSS THE ROAD.

II

A CHRISTIAN PROGRAM FOR THE NEW RURAL LIFE

Rural life is changing. Farmers have new interests. They travel more, subscribe to more newspapers and magazines, and maintain a higher standard of living. Their new agricultural organizations—the farm bureau and the cooperatives—are giving them a new desire for team-work. As their individualism gives place to a group consciousness, so their individualistic religion gives place to a desire for cooperative church activity. Religion still means to them a personal communion with the Father, yet they are asking how their religion should affect the countryside in which they live.

Christians everywhere are seeking a program that will fit in with our rapidly changing social and economic conditions. In this study book we are considering ways and means of Christianizing the new countryside. Let us inquire further into the interests of rural people. Perhaps in this way we may see what the new rural Christian program should be.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES

A farmer described his Sunday-school class session thus: "In our Sunday-school class there are fifteen men between twenty-five and forty years of age. The teacher does most of the talking. He asks questions about the lesson, but no one will say a word. He both asks and

answers the questions. During the last three or four minutes of the hour, he applies the lesson; that is, he mentions some modern questions such as law enforcement, the Ku Klux Klan, world peace, or a Christian attitude towards other races and religions. As soon as he mentions such questions as these, everyone wants to talk at once, but then the closing bell rings and we must stop."

Does not this indicate the need for a new type of religious instruction? The Sunday-school teacher may well recognize the natural interests of his class and their week-day activities.

"Our minister," said a layman, "is afraid to discuss present-day civic and social problems, such as honest government, wholesome recreation, and the abolition of child labor. He believes in these things, but he is afraid of offending the 'stand-pat' group in the church, so he continues to talk in generalities, saying only those things with which everybody agrees. He thinks progressively, but he acts with the conservatives."

Perhaps some people think it is not within the church's sphere to encourage laymen to become interested in these topics. If the church is to attract and hold the interest of progressive people, rural as well as urban, it must do so.

A layman once came to his pastor and said, "I wish we had a class in our church in which we could study social problems."

"My, I'm glad to hear you say that!" said his pastor. "We'll have one." These two men started such a class, and it has now been a success for over fifteen years.

On the other hand, a certain minister preached a sermon on efficient government just before election day and he exhorted his members to "vote as they prayed." The next day the local paper came out with a long editorial advising this pastor "not to mix politics and religion," but to "stick to the old-time religion," to the "pure and unadulterated gospel."

We are coming to think, however, that none of these things are adulterations of the gospel. A Christian program for the new rural life must include civic righteousness, public health, wholesome social life, child welfare, happy home life, and an adequate income.

A great agricultural leader, a member of the President's National Agricultural Commission, who is also a teacher of a Sunday-school class of men in his home church, described the work of the church thus:

"In the old days, the function of the church was to tell people what they ought to do. Now they know this already. They know it from their general knowledge and they learn it from their increased reading. The big task of the church now is to inspire people to do what they know they ought to do."

INCREASED READING AMONG RURAL PEOPLE

Let us consider what he calls the "increased reading" of rural people. Let us make an estimate of what he calls "their general knowledge." A graduate student at Cornell selected a township in New York State and studied the reading of every family in it, visiting 179 farms. He found that 301 weekly agricultural papers and 204 bi-weekly or monthly farm magazines were

taken by these 179 farmers, an average of three farm papers in every home.

"But in these farm papers," you say, "they get only technical information about agriculture and home-making, and not any general knowledge." Even if this were true, these 179 homes subscribe, in addition to their agricultural papers, to 161 daily papers and to 148 weekly newspapers. There may be some who still question daily papers taken as an accurate index of a family's general intelligence. For such we add the information that general magazine subscriptions in this community are divided as follows:

Ladies' Home Journal	34	Youth's Companion	6
American Magazine	29	Cosmopolitan	6
Saturday Evening Post	24	Pathfinder	6
McCall's Magazine	24	Today's Housewife	6
Needlecraft Magazine	22	Christian Advocate	5
Woman's Home Companion	16	Household Magazine	5
Pictorial Review	16	National Geographic Magazine	5
People's Home Journal	14	Good Stories	5
Woman's World	10		—
Christian Herald	9		
Good Housekeeping	7	*Total*	249

In brief, we find the following reading matter in these 179 homes:

Weekly farm papers	301	Weekly newspapers	148
Bi-weekly or monthly farm magazines	204	Magazines (not agricultural)	249
Daily newspapers	161		

Total circulation, 1,063
An average of 5.9 *periodicals per home*

The fact that 161 daily papers come into these homes every day, or a total of 966 every week, as compared with fourteen religious papers, indicates the community's interest in the latest happenings, or so-called news.

Dividing these papers in another way we have:

Secular papers	1,049—or 99 per cent
Religious papers	14—or 1 per cent

We would all agree that the proportion of religious papers read in these 179 homes is far too small. And this immediately raises the question in our minds, has the church been doing all that it should to help the farmer through the agency of religious journalism? On the other hand, though we deplore this small number of denominational or religious papers to be found in the farmer's household, are not many of the so-called "secular" magazines religious in the help which they give, by their general tone and by special articles and departments, toward achieving a higher plane of living, spiritual as well as physical?

This leads us to the theme of this chapter, that all our so-called "secular activities" should be Christian and that life is a unit instead of two fractions,—an "artificial bifurcation,"—one religious, and the other something else. We shall think together of ways in which the church can Christianize all phases of the new rural life.

A CHRISTIAN PROGRAM

A Christian program for the new rural life should accomplish the following results:

1. Strengthen family ties in the midst of all the present-day forces that tend to tear them apart, and stress the sacredness of family life.

2. Make the children the center of the home and community life, thus using the stones with which we construct reformatories to build parish houses; using the rope with which we have been hanging people to construct playground swings; giving as much space to parks as to cemeteries; having schoolhouses as fine as barns, as much furniture in the house for the children as for guests, as much time for the bedtime story-hour as for the radio.

3. Emphasize both health and holiness, both sanitation and saintliness, before Him who tells us that we are the temples of the living God!

4. Put more emphasis upon worship, but also recognize the fact that religious obligation is not exhausted by going to church; neither is the church's task completed by simply getting people to come to meetings.

5. Develop a Christian atmosphere in which a clean and wholesome social life can be lived in this day when commercial agencies are bidding for the control of all recreation.

6. Christianize all relationships in such a way that, as we are drawn closer together by improved methods of communication and by cooperative economic agencies, we may build that world brotherhood which has been our ideal for so long.

7. Make this earth beautiful which God has made holy, and conserve its fertility as well as its beauty for future generations.

8. Look upon government and laws as the best judgment of the best people, and develop the individual conscience to obey and to enforce the law.

9. Put the spirit of Christ into every-day life, so large a portion of which consists in earning a living, placing service above profits, ideals above dividends, and human relationships above material wealth.

Let us now examine these nine statements to see with how many of them, if any, we can agree.

THE CHURCH AND THE MODERN RURAL HOME

A group of women were holding an all-day meeting in the basement of a rural church, under the auspices of the county home bureau. The home demonstration agent for the county and a specialist from the State College of Agriculture were present. The meeting had begun at 9:30 A.M. and continued until 4:00 P.M. During the informal conversation at the dinner table, the pastor's wife remarked to one of the women, "We missed you at church Sunday."

"Yes, I was sorry to miss," she answered, "but I just can't get my work done up and get to church by eleven o'clock in the morning. We have so many chores."

"But," someone reminded her, "you were here at 9:30 this morning to attend this home bureau meeting."

"Yes," she explained, "I would have missed part of the meeting if I had been late."

She easily excused herself for missing church, but this new organization of farm women interested her

so much that she would not think of missing one of its meetings. The newness of it made its appeal no doubt, but also farm women look upon it as a practical association that brings them help in their daily work.

"This has been a fine meeting," one of the guests said to the pastor's wife as she was leaving for home at four o'clock that afternoon.

"I could not help but feel disappointed all the day," the pastor's wife replied. "I watched this big crowd here. They came early and stayed to the end. I kept thinking how I would like to see them show this same interest in coming to church. I have often wondered if these training schools in nutrition or clothing, in child welfare or recreation, were a hindrance or a help to church attendance."

It so happened that this apparent jealousy or misunderstanding between the church and the home bureau in this community increased until the pastor refused the home-bureau women the use of the church basement for their meetings.

Let us consider the problem which this incident suggests. There was a time, not so very long ago, when the church was practically the only institution besides the school that was to be found in rural communities. People went to church if they went anywhere. A little over ten years ago home demonstration work was begun in the South. The need for food conservation during the War gave new impetus to this important work, and now in many counties in the United States women are organized to carry on projects dealing with the home, such as nutrition, clothing, recreation, health, household management, civics, home beautification, and

child welfare. Extension agents with scientific training in these subjects are employed, and are paid by the counties themselves with the help of state and federal appropriations.

The pastor's wife just quoted suggested that this new interest of farm women in home-making interfered with their church attendance. Should not the church strive to cooperate rather than compete with an organization like this, whose purpose is to bring about a happy and efficient home life?

The aims and the ideals of this association of farm women have been written into a creed by Dr. Ruby Green Smith,[1] as follows:

> To maintain the highest ideals of home life; to count children the most important of crops; to mother them so that their bodies may be sound, their minds clear, their spirits happy, and their characters generous.
>
> To place service above comfort; to let loyalty to high purpose silence discordant notes; to let neighborliness supplant hatreds; to be discouraged never.
>
> To lose self in generous enthusiasms; to extend to the less fortunate a helping hand; to believe one's community may become the best of communities; and to cooperate with others for the common ends of a more abundant home and community life.
>
> This is the offer of the home bureau to the home-maker of today.

It would seem that a Christian program for the new rural life should seek to aid in every possible way this and other organizations that support and strengthen the home. Where could one find a better opportunity for Christian service in his own community than in seeking to improve the homes there by working through

[1] Associate state leader of home demonstration agents in New York.

this home-makers' organization? How could our missionary boards render a more worth-while service to needy communities than by sending to them Christian young women trained in this most practical subject of home economics? We began our home mission enterprise by building churches and inviting people to come to them to get religion. Now that the churches are built, we find that we can express the same high missionary ideals by taking religion to the people in their homes and giving them opportunity to show its effect on their lives by church attendance and also by the methods and manner of their daily home life. Happy and efficient home life is but an expression of our religious life, and one way to bring the kingdom of heaven upon earth is for us to join this great organization of farm women and give it our intelligent and active support, thus tying up the church with this program of home improvement.

THE PLACE OF THE CHURCH IN CHILD WELFARE

A certain church considered, at its annual congregational meeting, what its big aim, or purpose, or slogan, should be for the coming year. After no little discussion it was decided to make the year in that church "The Children's Year." Its whole year's program, the selection of lesson material, the expenditure of funds, the remodeling of the church, the changing of the church lawn, and even the sermons were to be guided by the needs and the interests of the children. If at least one church in every District or Presbytery or Diocese should decide on such a plan, the other

churches before long would likewise catch a vision of what Jesus meant when he placed a child in the midst of his congregation and told them that "of such was the kingdom of God."

Any and every church is interested in the welfare of children, you say? Let us investigate before we agree to this.

A small village with one wide central street, beautiful shade trees, neat lawns, well-kept homes, and two good Protestant churches—an ideal village—held a union meeting of the two churches. The object of the meeting was to discuss a community program for the year. Two projects were proposed, the collecting of a historical exhibit and the organizing of some boys' agricultural clubs and of some girls' clubs in home-making. They talked for an hour about the historical exhibit, and voted to devote two days to such a project; but there was not enough interest in boys' and girls' clubs to arouse even one person from either of the two churches to volunteer to become a leader. They had time to dig out antique furniture and age-worn documents from their attics and thus revel in their past history, but the pastor, who was presiding, was unable to get anyone interested in a garden or a poultry club for boys or a flower or a sewing club for girls. It could scarcely be claimed that these two churches were greatly interested in child welfare.

Any rural church that is trying to adapt its program to the new rural life must take into account the recent boys' and girls' club movement. Commencing about ten years ago with corn clubs for the boys and canning clubs for the girls, and later adding pig clubs, potato

clubs, calf clubs, sewing clubs, cooking clubs, poultry clubs, and farm mechanics' clubs, this movement has captured the interests of the teen-age boys and girls of rural America. Nearly a million boys and girls are now enrolled in one or more of these junior projects. Is it not the teen-age boy or girl that we fear so much to lose from our churches? What an opportunity for character building through these clubs!

The following incident happened recently in a boys' corn club. One of the boys went to a local farmer who had some very fine corn and asked him for two of his best ears. The man gave the boy his choice. As the boy started home, he hesitated, and then he returned the corn, explaining that some of the boys had destroyed two ears which he had set aside for his exhibit at the State Fair and that he had come to get some to replace those.

"But I guess I won't take 'em," he continued. "It wouldn't be quite square, would it, for me to put two ears of your corn in my exhibit?" and he walked home empty handed. The suggestion that such an incident raises is, that since a million boys and girls are in such clubs, these experiences might be used in teaching religion, and in giving point to a Sunday-school lesson. Why should not our churches accept the leadership of these boys' and girls' clubs as a part of the week-day program of their church groups? One day I saw, in imagination, a million boys and girls kept loyal to the church because the church leaders were willing to accept the responsibility of this club work. The day following, at a meeting of fifty-two rural ministers, I learned—and this was not imagination—that not one

of their number was actively interested in any boys' or girls' club or belonged to the farm bureau, and that only two belonged to the Grange, and that they considered these modern movements in rural life merely as hindrances to church attendance. And during the afternoon session, I listened to a long paper on the importance of preaching more doctrinal sermons. I wonder when and how we are going to get our churches to take a more important part in the welfare of the children.

"This is an exceptional case," you say. It happens that the following week I found another group of church leaders still less interested. And the following month, at the national annual meeting of one of our greatest Protestant bodies, so much time was consumed debating the origin of the human species and related questions that there was not enough time left in the convention to hear the report of the board of Sunday schools.

Last year, in Chicago, the presidents of nine large and nationally known railroads gave a banquet to 1,600 boys' and girls' club members who had won first places in their county contests. Five hundred banks loaned $900,000 in one year to club boys and girls to finance their projects. Let us in the churches also see and grasp this opportunity for training Christian leaders in rural America by means of these modern movements among farm boys and girls. Our religion, to be vital and practical, must appeal to the modern man and adapt itself to the rapid changes that are taking place.

Many resolutions have been written and passed with

acrimonious earnestness, condemning our public schools, both elementary and collegiate, because they do not teach religion as some of us think they should. We even specify just how many verses of the Bible should be read in the public school each morning. Earnest church people who pass these resolutions regarding the number of Bible verses that their children should hear read each morning at school do not read that same number of verses to their children each day at home. In fact, some of them seldom read the Bible to their children at all. These same people, in large numbers, oppose the consolidation of schools. They vote for the school trustee who promises to keep down school taxes, and hence they have a poorer school. Which is the better Christian, he who votes for better schools, or he who votes for a resolution compelling the teacher to give his children the instruction in religion at school which the parent himself should give them at home? Seeing to it that the Bible is read in the school and making sure that the school is a good school, scholastically and otherwise, are both Christian obligations. The education, health, and play life of the children of our community is our religious responsibility—our Christian duty.

We hear a great deal of talk about making the world better. I wonder if the way to do this is not to make each community better. No one would question that the welfare of the children of America is a great home missionary opportunity. Perhaps the way to improve these conditions is for each church to enlist in a child-welfare crusade in its own community.

If you will study, with me, two communities, you can

readily see the difference in the influence various churches are exerting along the line of child welfare. Both these examples are actual villages and the conditions as set forth are true in detail.

The first community is a village of 858 people. It has six lodges, five card clubs, a G. A. R. post, an American Legion, a motion picture theater, and a chamber of commerce. It has five churches—four Protestant and one Catholic.

On Monday evenings the Masons or Eastern Stars meet. On Tuesday evenings the Odd Fellows or Rebeccas meet. On Wednesday and Saturday evenings there is a movie. On Thursday evenings there is a regular stock company show. On Friday evenings the card clubs meet. On Saturday evenings there are both movies and dances.

There are three halls for dancing, in one of which twelve dances were held last winter. There are seven dining-rooms and seven kitchens in the lodges and churches of the village, used mainly for adults. There is a recreation club for men. Let us see how this community is providing for its children.

The schoolhouse was built twenty-five years ago, and has had no improvements made since. There is no gymnasium in the school. No classes in home-making, agriculture, or manual training are offered because of lack of space in the building and lack of money. There is in the village no recreation club for boys or girls.

The home bureau, which had classes in such subjects as child-feeding and recreation, had twenty-five members two years ago, fifteen members last year, and this year it disbanded.

The parent-teacher's association, whose task is "to promote the best interests of parenthood, to raise the standard of home life, and to further a better understanding and a closer relation between home, school, church, and state," disbanded this year after electing three presidents, each of whom in turn refused to serve.

The five churches tried to unite in conducting week-day classes in religion, in cooperation with the public schools, but the strongest Protestant church objected to the plan and asserted that it, alone, of the five churches held to the "fundamentals" of religion and therefore it did not want the other churches teaching its children in any joint program.

The other community is a small hamlet in the adjoining county consisting of seventy-three families in all. Here the Catholic church conducts a small parochial school. The single Protestant church, built in 1815, erected during the last three years a $50,000 parish house, every room of which is suitable for work with children and young people. The community has but one lodge, and the only motion pictures available are furnished by the Protestant church. A daily vacation Bible school held in the summer of 1925, had an average attendance of ninety-eight children. They were brought to the church in two auto busses from homes within a radius of seven miles in the surrounding country.

In the church there is one girls' and two boys' basketball teams, and also a baseball team. In addition to the usual junior organizations, there is conducted a regular class in training young people in church membership.

The adults in this community are interested in child welfare; in the first community described, they are absorbed in their own selfish pleasures.

The only time the Master showed great displeasure with His disciples was when they kept the children away from Him. The most severe punishment He ever recommended, that of hanging a millstone around a man's neck and throwing him into the sea, was for the heinous crime of offending a child. Should not the modern church be interested, actively interested, in the health, play, and education of the children of its community?

THE CHURCH AND THE NEW HEALTH CRUSADE

Our greatest reform movements have practically all had their beginnings in the church. A gospel of love must have an outlet in service. Consequently, philanthropy, higher education, temperance, and the care of the sick are the results of the teaching and preaching of the church. In the parable of Jesus in which He was describing the last judgment, He said those would inherit the Kingdom, who, in His name, had fed the hungry, cared for the strangers, clothed the needy, and visited the sick. For two thousand years the church has been interested in the physical as well as the spiritual needs of mankind. As a result, hospitals have been built throughout every Christian land. But now we are realizing that keeping people well is as much a Christian service as caring for those who are sick. Let us see what new agencies we have for teaching health, and enlist our churches in a health crusade.

"I went to a school," said a county nurse, "and found a child nearly blind in one eye. The family physician did not know about it; neither did the parents. The mother cried when I told her. 'What can we do about it?' she asked. After consulting the family physician, we decided to take the child to a specialist in Kansas City for an operation. The treatment which followed was successful, and the child's sight was saved."

Work of this nature is being done every day by county nurses.

Another nurse told me the following facts:

"I've seen children all crippled with rheumatism on account of diseased tonsils. Many visits have had to be made to the parents to get them to agree to an operation for removing the tonsils and adenoids. But when this was done, in a few weeks the health of the children began to improve. And these same parents who at first seemed so skeptical, thanked me later with tears in their eyes."

Still another county nurse contributed this touching story:

"One day while examining the children in a rural school, I found two children afflicted with hernia. They needed hospital treatment at once. Their father explained to me that he could not afford it, trying to conceal his emotion while he told me about his financial condition. But he went with me to see his family physician, who suggested a surgeon. We next visited the surgeon. On explaining the situation, the surgeon said, 'You get their hospital bill looked after, and I'll make no charge for the operation.' I went to the hospital and the people in charge agreed to give us their services

at actual cost. Then I went to the Rotary Club in the near-by town and asked them to guarantee the hospital bill, which they agreed to do. The operation was quite successful. The father was more than pleased with the results. He sold a cow to pay for all of the hospital care."

Despite the importance of such work, this nurse had to discontinue her service in the county because there were not enough people interested in it to support it.

A fourth county nurse gave me the following statistics:

"I usually visit two rural schools a day and examine every pupil. For each one I make out a health chart, and when necessary, I send the children to a clinic. In the entire county I found more than a thousand children whose teeth needed care. In one year I arranged that from seventy-five to a hundred children should have their tonsils and adenoids removed. When I was not doing this, I was busy teaching classes of mothers in home care of the sick or first aid."

These are conversations I have had with county nurses. Nearly half of the counties in the United States employ these trained women to teach health to the children in the public schools. They get the children to drink more milk and less tea and coffee; to eat more vegetables and fruit, and less meat and fewer sweets; to sleep with windows open, to drink plenty of water, to brush their teeth twice daily, to play in the open, and to attend Sunday school.

"I've persuaded many a child to go to Sunday school," said one of these county nurses. A nurse gets acquainted personally with each child in the county,

and the children love her. Outside of the parents she is the only person who gives them individual attention.

The salaries of these county nurses are paid in part by the county supervisors or commissioners, in part by the school boards, in part by the State or Federal Government, and in part by voluntary organizations such as the Kiwanis, Rotary, and Lions Clubs. Why should not the churches be the first in the county to support in an organized way these county nurses?

It was not long ago that we thought the duty of the church in health matters was simply to build hospitals and to care for the sick. This has been, and still is, a welcome expression of practical Christianity. But today the churches which also help to provide for a county nurse are adapting their program to the new rural life.

Dr. Hedger, a noted leader in health education, is responsible for the statement that eighty-four per cent of the children in rural districts have bad teeth. Probably no one will send these children as patients to our church hospitals. Then has the church no responsibility in the matter? Even though these children should all come to our hospitals for dental care, are we going to let the next generation of children acquire the same defects? Teaching the proper care of the teeth is as practical Christianity as is conducting a dental clinic.

The churches have built many orphanages. No one would question that herein lies a beautiful expression of the teachings of Jesus. But keeping these same children from becoming orphans is no less a Christian task. A sanatorium for tubercular patients is still a responsibility of the churches, but we must remember

that it is the uncared for that get tuberculosis. We have no right to neglect the children and then soothe our consciences by giving money to our church hospitals.

We have compulsory school attendance; but think of the injustice of compelling a boy to go to school who cannot see the blackboard! One girl who was kept in school by the compulsory attendance law had five contagious diseases during the first year. She has a bad heart and other handicaps. We may enforce the law and keep her in school, but at the present rate we shall murder her before she is fourteen. Keeping a child in school is important, but it is more important to keep her in health. A girl grows up but once; but she can study all her life.

Some of us have felt that the church's responsibility for the school children stops when we get a law passed that compels the teacher to read six verses from the Bible each morning. This is important, but so also is the height of the seats in which the pupils sit during the rest of the day.

In one county in Iowa, one of the denominations is now building a hospital. In that same county thirty-eight per cent of the children in the schools are repeating their grades, many of them because of improper care. Is not the task of the churches in that county as much to teach health as to care for the sick?

A State College of Agriculture recently made a motion picture film of a wonderful and well-kept calf. This film showed all the rules regarding the way a calf should be treated. In the same film was a boy, leading the calf. The boy was anemic, stooped, narrow chested, his teeth protruded because of adenoids, and he was

in great need of intelligent care. The college of agriculture teaches us about the care of calves; the church must be as much interested in the care of boys.

For a certain children's home, the running expenses last year totaled $4,099.11. Would it not be a much better service to the community if instead of Christian families subscribing funds for this institutional home, they would each take one of these orphan children and give it a real home?

If your church wishes to enlist in this great task of teaching health, you will be able to get plenty of lecturers from the State Health Department and, incidentally, you will, of course, see that the church is properly ventilated before the lecturer arrives. Your program should include more than occasional talks. You will need a study class. If the ladies' aid society would request it, probably the county nurse would conduct a class in home nursing or in the prevention of disease. Your lectures and study program will develop into activities, and you will soon find clinics being conducted in the church by a local physician. The germ-breeding places will be removed; swamps will be drained; a clean-up campaign will be in order; individual drinking cups will be used in public places; and regular medical examinations will be given at the schools. A county nurse will be the best leader in this program of health education. You will find your church commending its religious administration by nothing more effectively than by its concern for the health of its people.

CHRISTIANIZING THE COMMUNITY'S RECREATION

The increased emphasis on commercialized amusements is another indication of the changing rural life. Fifteen years ago, the movies were just beginning to win the attention of the American people. Their existence in the rural villages does not extend further back than ten years. In this brief period, 16,000 commercial movie houses have been built, and through these, 25,000,000 people pass every twenty-four hours.[2] The fact that a typical rural village is crowded on Saturday night until a late hour by people attending the movies must inevitably affect church attendance on the following day. Sunday movies of course offer an additional problem.

Within the last three years there has been a great increase in the number of public dance halls built on the outskirts of county-seat towns. A chauffeur who spends all his time taking musicians to and from public dances recently told me that it was a common occurrence for people to come as far as thirty miles to these public dances.

There has also been, recently, an increased attendance at professional baseball games. The total attendance at the games of only one of the big leagues was over four million people during the past season.[3] Apparently our recreation is tending to become commercialized and passive.

Not long ago, a hundred people met in their country

[2] Data from Mr. John Edgeton, President of the American Association of Manufacturers.

[3] Facts from John A. Heydler, President of the National League.

church to discuss ways and means of improving their community.

"The question that worries me most," said one mother, "is where our young people go for their good times. They always go out of the community, and we never know with whom they are associating. This very night there is a public dance down on the state road. They say the person who runs it often makes a hundred dollars a night. Young people whom we know nothing about come there from a radius of twenty miles."

The result of this discussion was a decision to organize in that church a community club with the purpose of providing a recreational program for old and young. One of the loyal members of the church was elected president of the club. Within a month he resigned, with the excuse that some of the other members of the church were finding fault with his social programs. This church was seventy-five years old. It had had time enough to train a lot of people. But its present membership conceived their Christian duty toward recreation to be simply that of censoring it. Realizing this situation, no other member of that church would accept the office, and those of us who were advising with the community had to ask a man who was not a member of that church at all to act as president of the club. It is a question whether this church was really endeavoring to Christianize its social life or simply to condemn the recreation which commercial agencies were furnishing.

One of the obstacles facing the church in her effort to Christianize a community's recreation is the fear of desecrating the church building. A certain congregation added a social hall to its old building, but for fear

it might be harmed, the members were afraid to allow it to be used for anything but lectures and suppers. A boys' class in the Sunday school petitioned the church officials for the use of this room for basket-ball. After no little discussion, the boys' request was refused.

"They might knock the plaster off the walls," protested one of the men.

"They would get the chairs all dirty, so we'd hate to sit on them with our good clothes on," was the way one woman voiced her objections.

Finally the boys were told to go and build a hall of their own. Of course they could not do that.

"Where is this class of boys now?" I asked one of these same church officials.

"Oh, they're all scattered and gone," was the reply.

"We don't have any young men's class in the Sunday school now," someone explained.

"Young people are quite a problem, nowadays, don't you think?" said another.

This church still has its "social hall," even if its boys have gone. What we take care of, we keep.

Christianizing the community's play and recreation means that people shall have their good times under Christian auspices. It means that Christian principles shall guide in the selection of the community's recreation. It means that in many instances the church shall furnish the equipment, and usually the leaders as well, for the play-times of young and old. In what better way than in play can a church teach honesty, courage, fair treatment for all, team work, health, self-sacrifice, and friendliness—traits all essential for making our lives happier and better?

Many churches are demonstrating this principle. One of these is the Blue Grass Church, in southern Indiana. After discovering the dearth of recreational facilities in his parish and learning that the young people went away to the city for their good times, the pastor of this church read the following announcement from his pulpit one Sunday morning:

"Next Saturday afternoon at two o'clock there will be a meeting in Ace Hillyer's pasture, when games for all ages will be played."

Thus the Blue Grass Church started its social program. One hundred and twenty-five people came to this first "Play Day." On the Saturday that was the busiest of the year in outside interests, there was an attendance of thirty; and one week there were as many as three hundred present.

One of the officers of the church opposed the plan at first, but when he saw the effect it had on his own boys, he became one of its staunchest supporters. One Sunday in harvest time the pastor said, "Since everyone will be cutting wheat next Saturday, perhaps we had better omit our recreational program." The same man who had at first opposed the recreational plan arose and said, "No, let's play as usual next Saturday. My experience has been that I can get more work out of my boys in five and a half days now than I could get before in six."

But this recreational program soon demanded a Community House. This was accordingly built. The keen interest in this building and the great desire for it is indicated by the fact that the boys themselves made all the equipment for this house. Seventy-five boys now

belong to the athletic association, one of the church organizations. Last year ten basket-ball teams were organized in this one parish.

The recreational program included not only plays and games, but also boys' and girls' clubs in agriculture and home economics. This church conducted the first summer camp for boys' and girls' club members in the State. The pastor boosts club work from his pulpit just as he does foreign missions or tithing, because he finds in it the same values for character building. At the last agricultural fair held in this parish,—it lasted four days,—there were over a thousand entries, and the prizes won amounted to over fifteen hundred dollars.

When this pastor began his social program here six years ago, there was not a college graduate in the community. Now that community has nineteen young people attending some college or university.

"But do they join the church?" is the question ministers usually ask. Even if they did not, such a program is well worth while, for these young people are developing strong, clean characters and social attitudes. They are boys and girls such as you would enjoy having for neighbors. But, of course, if they associate the church with their good times, with new friendships made, and with a clean life, it is not surprising that they will want to enroll with the Great Captain for the game of life. Sixty young people joined this church on one Easter Sunday. At a recent communion Sunday as many young people as adults went to the communion table. Two of the young men of the parish have recently been recommended to the District Conference for licenses to preach.

"The biggest thing we have in Iowa," a college president once said, "is our corn crop." But the biggest and best crop in the Blue Grass parish is its boys and girls.

During the past year the writer has conducted extension schools for training recreational leaders. Eighty-three per cent of the 1,033 people who attended were church leaders. This interest of the church in social and recreational life is one of the ways in which the church is adapting itself to the new rural life.

CHRISTIANIZING COMMUNITY COOPERATION

The task of the church is, first of all, the regeneration of the individuals in the community and then the Christianizing of the relationships between neighbors. Jesus gave us this as the first and great commandment; first to love God and then to love our fellowmen.

In a little town named Angelica, I was much impressed and disappointed one day because of the village feuds. The women's home demonstration club was in a turmoil because a woman who had not been chosen president was "trying to run things." The social committee found other women more willing to lead than to follow. Whoever laid out this town and named it, had in mind, no doubt, one tall-spired church facing the village green. But all in a row stood five competitive churches! A civic club in the town was carrying on a study club, their subject of study for the year being "world peace." The question kept coming to me while I was there, "Isn't world peace to be achieved by beginning in each community to Christianize the rela-

tionships between neighbors?" The church of today is confronted by the great task of Christianizing community cooperation. The world is more in danger from the littleness than from the wickedness of men.

The new rural life has brought with it a feeling of distrust between town and country people. The one party is prejudiced against the other. Originally, every small town thought it was going to be a city. The village people, in fact, took upon themselves certain airs, and looked down upon country "rubes" and "hayseeds." But the situation has changed somewhat lately. The automobile has given the farmer a different attitude. He can now "look down upon" the village. He can go as far as the real city to trade, or he may send off to a mail-order house for his clothes, household goods, and general merchandise. Mail-order houses take money and business away from village merchants. Sears, Roebuck and Company did $220,000,000 worth of business in 1924. Montgomery Ward and Company have increased their sales 114 per cent in the last three years.[4] These businesses succeed because they sell largely for cash instead of for credit, and also such firms can buy in large lots. The local merchant is asked to sell for credit and yet he must compete in retail price with the mail-order house! The mail-order business tends to widen the gap between the farmers and the village people.

Chain stores are growing rapidly. A study of twenty-seven grocery chain stores shows that their trade has increased 214 per cent in the last five years. The amount of business done by some of these firms is tre-

[4] Data from Standard Statistics Company, Inc.

mendous. The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company started out to sell nothing but teas and coffees. Today this firm sells all kinds of groceries and they have over 12,000 stores and 35,000 employees.[5]

The same customers who buy from the new chain stores telephone their orders to their old village merchant, ask him to deliver their goods promptly, charge the account, send them a monthly statement, and carry the credit account until they have sufficient funds to pay it. Fifty-three per cent of the sales of village merchants are credit sales. It costs the village merchant for the interest on the money that he has outstanding, for collecting it, and for the few bad debts an average of 13.84 per cent a year on all his outstanding credit. He could afford to sell a dollar's worth of goods for about ninety-four cents if he were paid in cash![6] Add to this the cost of telephone and delivery service, which is a still greater expense, and you see his enormous handicap in competing with chain stores. Are we fair to the village merchant in expecting him to give us additional service and to compete with chain stores and mail-order houses in prices? It would hardly seem so. These village merchants are usually the officials of the village church, the church we want the farmers to attend.

It is necessary for the farmers and the village people to work together in these days if they are to support adequately their social agencies. A high school costs

[5] Information from W. G. Wrightson, Vice-President of the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company.

[6] Data from an Economic Study of Rural Store Credit in New York State, by Leland Spencer. Bulletin 430, September, 1924, Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y.

too much to build and operate for the farmers and the village people to have separate schools.

There was a time when ministers made their living by farming on week-days and preaching on Sundays. Their parishioners gave them donations. Even the minister's horse was fed from the many neighbors' granaries. But no one furnishes gasoline for his automobile at the present time. And it takes an educated minister to run a church nowadays. All this costs money both to the minister and to his parish. In short, the village and the farm people should unite if they would attract the type of pastor needed now and provide for his necessary support.

A library run by and for the village only is a costly though worth-while institution. Its usefulness could be doubled if the farmers would unite with the townspeople in operating and using it.

People everywhere are coming to believe in public health, in the prevention of disease, in quarantine, in treatments which make people immune to diphtheria, to scarlet fever, and to smallpox, and in medical examinations in the schools. A public-health program should include an entire community, both the village and its neighboring countryside. In fact, the two must unite in order to support a public-health program.

The church, the one institution which more than any other teaches brotherhood, must unite these factions of town and country. With the automobile and improved roads, farm people can come to the village church. There has been a great deal of interest in foreign missions during the last twenty-five years, as is shown by the fact that over two million books on this subject have

been sold in that period. During the same period the village churches have almost entirely lost their hold upon farm people. Do we not need a missionary motive no less appealing than the interest in foreign missions, whereby we may win back the farm people to the village church?

In a village whose population is 1,600 people, only six farm families attend the three village churches, and few if any of the farmers living near go elsewhere to church. A near-by town church has 1,400 members, only four of whom are farmers. In another village church of 350 members, five are from the farms. The above question has recently been asked in churches throughout eighteen counties and the conclusion has been that the town and village churches fail to reach the surrounding farm population.

And not only must there be a spirit of cooperation between town and country, but also among the farmers themselves. One of the most significant things about the new rural life, as we have noted in Chapter I, is the recent rapid growth of cooperative marketing. Farmers have always helped each other in production—butchering, spraying, barn-raising, silo-filling, stacking, haying, and threshing, but only within the last ten years have they begun in a large way to sell their produce together. This includes the formation of local cooperatives, such as creameries, elevators, livestock shipping associations, and, in recent years, pools, federations of local and large central agencies, whereby farmers everywhere who have the same commodity to sell join hands in marketing it. This should mean, of

course, new applications of Christian principles. The secret of successful commodity marketing is the maintenance of certain standards of grading and packing, of putting on the market only a certain quality of goods. The man who thinks it will not matter if he puts in a few small apples or a few old eggs will upset the whole cooperative principle. Contracts are sometimes used, but cooperation is never a complete success until contracts, though written, are not needed. Six million farmers today need the help of Christian principles in order to uphold these necessary standards. He who says that religion is only a matter of the next world has never been a member of a farmers' cooperative. If the knotty problems of cooperative marketing could be discussed in the church at a week-night meeting and if Christian principles could be applied to these problems, one of the main sources of our community conflicts might be removed.

One of the essential teachings of the New Testament is the sacrifice of self for the good of all. This principle can be applied nowhere better than in commodity marketing. Farmers make a temporary sacrifice to secure greater ultimate returns; i.e., they sacrifice the present for the future, which is one of the most well-known teachings of religion. The man who junks his little neighborhood district school in order to help build a more efficient consolidated school in the next neighborhood is putting into practise the principle, "He that loseth his life shall save it." He who can glory in the success of a church other than his own is ready to talk church cooperation. We prove the divinity of

Christ, not by separating from each other, but by putting love into cooperative action, as Jesus himself did.

A Christian program for the new rural life means that the church should help maintain a happy and efficient home life; take an active part in constructive child welfare; enlist in the teaching of health, as well as in caring for the sick; Christianize the social and recreational life, instead of simply condemning the commercialized amusements; and teach community cooperation.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Farmers are interested in the practical application of Christian principles to every-day living. Their keen interest in daily happenings and current events is shown by their reading large numbers of newspapers and magazines, as well as by their joining the new farm organizations.

A Christian program for the new rural life means that the church should help maintain a happy and efficient home life. This can best be done by cooperating with the home bureau and all home-making clubs which are promoted by the state colleges of agriculture.

The proposed federal child labor amendment, or, failing that, more adequate state child labor laws, is awaiting the support of some great institution like the church, which is more interested in child welfare than in profits or dividends. The boys' and girls' agricultural and home-making clubs are now capturing the interest of

boys and girls on the farms. Church workers may well accept the leadership of these clubs as a part of the week-day activities of church groups. The improvement of the public schools is a better task for Christians in the countryside than condemning the schools for their lack of religious instruction.

A Christian program for the new rural life includes the teaching of health, as well as the care of the sick. County health nurses are being employed for such work and are much in need of the cooperation of the churches.

The church has a great opportunity for Christianizing the social and recreational life of today. Providing proper social life is a better plan than simply condemning the commercialized amusements which we have.

There is great need for the church to teach the spirit of cooperation in order to break down the petty cliques and feuds in village life and also to remove the feeling of distrust between town and country people. These barriers are largely social and economic. In order to put on an efficient modern program in education, health, or religion, it is important that town folk and farmers should unite. The church has a great opportunity to teach the spirit of cooperation which will make this possible.

III

EXTENSION WORK IN THE LOCAL PARISH

In rural America, there is an average of one church for every 463 inhabitants. Our greatest need, therefore, is not more churches; it is that these churches should reach out and gather in more people. The membership is only twenty per cent of the population. Four fifths of the people have not yet been reached.[1] Of the twenty per cent who are members of the church, 27.5 per cent are either non-resident or inactive.[2]

These facts challenge us to a program of extending the influence of each church out into its local parish. We have the buildings, but we haven't enough people in them. We have the machinery, the organization, the methods; but we who are in the church do not have the missionary zeal. Our evangelism has been a seasonal, sporadic venture rather than the central purpose of our activities. The theme of this chapter is the extension of the influence of each church in its local parish.

DISCOVERING THE NEEDS

We must first study our local field to discover the needs, to determine who in that community are out of the church, and why they are out. A missionary church, like a doctor, must not only heal the community's ills, but must diagnose the disease. All except

[1] These figures are based on the total population, including the children.

[2] Data from *The Town and Country Church in the United States.* Morse and Brunner.

quack doctors diagnose or study the patient before prescribing a remedy. A missionary church must have not only zeal and enthusiasm, but, since these may lead in circles or over the wrong road, it must also know the right road.

The following is the partial diagnosis of a community. Seventy families out of 110 were connected with no church. There were 155 children under sixteen years of age living in the community. Of these children, 129 were in the local rural schools. Twenty-three children were in the Baptist Sunday school, and six were in the Methodist Sunday school. One hundred of the 129 children who were in the public schools attended no Sunday school whatever.

The church which discovered these facts regarding the religious education of its children saw a great need. It had the name, the age, and the address of every boy and every girl in the seven school districts. It decided that the best method of reaching these children was by cooperating with the schools. Consequently, a week-day religious education program was begun. Religious instruction was given to all of these 129 children at the seven schoolhouses each week, with the consent of the schoolboard and of the parents.

When this program was begun, only nineteen per cent of the children were being reached by the local Sunday schools. Now ninety-eight per cent receive religious education from this church. Eleven boys and girls in one school affiliated themselves with the church. This church and its pastor succeeded because they discovered their task. Most rural communities need the same sort of intensive survey. Jesus, in his parables,

said that this search for the lost—the lost coin, the lost sheep—was the method of bringing in the kingdom of God.

Where there is more than one church in a community, a united study of the field is desirable. A village in Massachusetts that has five churches, decided to make a religious survey. As a result of that study, the five churches not only divided the unreached families according to their denominational preferences, but they agreed as to what church should undertake each of the various community projects. The Methodist church was to care for the community's recreation. The Unitarian church was to operate a regular automobile service on Sunday mornings to bring the children, who had no other means of conveyance to Sunday school. The other three churches carried on their projects likewise. The solution of "over-churching" here in North Andover was not the elimination of old churches but a division of new labor.

One of the interesting results of the survey of a parish is the discovery of church members who are not now affiliated with any local church. Rev. W. M. Alexander, in a survey of the Irving Community in Dallas County, Texas, found 190 Baptists in the local church, but there were also 294 unattached members or those who expressed a preference for the Baptist faith. Likewise, there were 137 Methodists in the local church and 220 unattached members or people giving the Methodist Church as their preference.

He discovered that in all there were 810 church members, 734 unattached members and those expressing a preference for one of the local churches, and 1,130

people who had no preference for, or interest in, any church. Like an engineer, a social engineer, he discovered the specific goals for these churches.

In a survey, we not only discover the non-members, but we undertake to find out the reason for their lack of interest in the church. A thorough survey includes not only a religious census of the families, but it also studies the community's social institutions. What are the economic needs, the social problems, the educational questions that are still unsolved? [3]

The fact that four people out of five in rural America are members of no church emphasizes the need for a missionary program among Christians; every Christian should be a missionary. Before the Resurrection, Jesus said, "Come unto me!"; afterwards He said, "Take me to them." The last command of Jesus was "Go!"

What would happen if, in all our churches, the usual announcement, "Preaching here next Sunday, both morning and evening; everyone is invited!" should be changed to: "Preaching here next Sunday morning. Instead of evening preaching service, each member of this church is asked to drive in his car out into the country and talk to one family about the work and the message of this church!"? The result of such a procedure would be that every member would get the missionary or extension idea.

In addition to discovering *who* is out of the church, we must find *why* they are out. "Why have the farmers lost interest in the church?"

[3] The Institute of Social and Religious Research, 370 Seventh Avenue, New York City, is recognized by many of the denominations as the most authentic source of information for obtaining the most efficient method of making such a survey.

DISCOURAGEMENT AMONG RURAL PEOPLE

Farmers are discouraged. Taxes are high, more than double what they were four years ago. New roads and other improvements have caused our tax bill to continue to rise. We are likely to think that, although taxes are higher, the price of the produce the farmer sells is likewise just as high; but this is not true. From a recent study made of farms in the township of Dryden, New York, it was learned that taxes have increased out of all proportion to the farmer's income. A typical case is cited. In 1825 the taxes on a certain farm in this township were $2.88, while in 1925 the taxes on the same farm were $128.92. Today the owners of the land have to raise 104 bushels of wheat to pay the taxes, while a hundred years ago three bushels paid them. Today taxes represent thirty-seven days of labor with farm wages averaging $3.50 a day, as compared with six days of labor at fifty cents a day in 1825.[4] It is not difficult to find farms where the taxes during the past year have used up the entire amount of the net rent.[5]

The farmers feel that they are being unfairly treated by the city people in this matter of taxes. For example, in Dane County, Wisconsin, where the farmers pay thirty per cent of the net rent on their farms for taxes, urban people pay only eleven per cent of the net rent on their real estate. A farmer in Wisconsin can-

[4] Study made by the Department of Farm Economics of the New York State College of Agriculture.

[5] In a study made of 177 farms in Chester County, Pennsylvania, it was learned that the taxes absorbed 66 per cent of the rent. In Lenawee County, Michigan, 38 per cent of the rent is used to pay the taxes; in Dane County, Wisconsin, 30 per cent; in Delaware County, New York, 31 per cent.

not understand why he should pay thirty per cent of his net rent for taxes, while the banks and trust companies pay only twelve per cent, and the manufacturing and mercantile corporations pay only seventeen per cent! [6]

The popular explanation of the situation is, "Farmers are just naturally a discontented group." The result is, however, that a class consciousness has developed. The farmers will not attend the town church because they feel that city people are in another class and are not treating them fairly from either an economic or a social standpoint.

A friendly spirit on the part of the town churches is needed, a spirit which would make the church members willing to carry on religious extension work in the rural regions roundabout, and thus break down the farmers' distrust of them and lack of interest in the church.

FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

Farmers are hard up. In 1919 and 1920, nearly all denominations put on great financial campaigns for missions. But the payment on pledges came to only about seventy per cent of the amount pledged during the first year, to sixty-five per cent the next year, to sixty per cent the next, and so on down to half the original pledge. Sermons, pamphlets, church papers, lantern slides, financial experts, "I will maintain" campaigns, and more "drives" were all brought forward to stop the slump. In trying to find the reason for this falling off of contributions one denomination moved its headquarters from New York to Chicago, another consolidated

[6] *Taxation of Farm Lands.* Richard T. Ely, Professor of Economics, University of Wisconsin.

its boards. Theological errors were blamed for the cause of another's financial difficulties. Let us study the farmer's income to find an explanation.

During these same years the value of farm products dropped in almost the same ratio as the gifts for benevolences. Some of these campaigns were put on during 1919 and some in 1920. We will use the farmer's income for 1920 as a base or 100 per cent. His income dropped next year to 55 per cent of what it was in 1920 when he made his pledge. In 1922 it was 57 per cent; in 1923 it was 64 per cent; in 1924, 65 per cent; and in 1925, 70 per cent. His payments on his pledge for benevolences fell off in about the same proportion as his income.

An acre yielded a farmer about 50 per cent more gross income in 1925 than it did in 1915, but not net income. He paid in 1925, 76 per cent more for what he bought—and his taxes increased in that time 126 per cent![7]

Naturally he was neither financially able nor in the proper state of mind for constant financial drives. He was surveyed but not served. He was driven, but few of us in the church tried to understand his problems. As a result, he lost interest in the church. Now more than half of the farms in the United States are mortgaged with an average debt of over $3,000 each. In some sections of states like Iowa, eighty per cent of the farms are mortgaged. The farmers' indebtedness in this state has nearly trebled since the World War.

[7] Data from the monthly reports of "Farm Economics" for the above years, published by the New York State College of Agriculture, Cornell University.

Delinquent taxes on Kansas farms have increased four and one half times in five years.[8]

People who are hard up get the "inferiority complex" about which we hear so much. They feel they are not wanted at church. They become discouraged and feel "out of it." Whatever may be the reason, four fifths of them do not go to church.

In a study made of 481 farm families in Schoharie County, New York, it was found that the group with the smallest income attended church only one fifth as many times during the year as the group with the largest income.[9] The 481 families were divided according to their standard of living; that is, according to the total value of goods they used in the past year. Note how, as this decreased, their attendance at church decreased also.

Number of families	*Total value of goods used*	*Homemakers' attendance during year at*		*Farm operators' attendance during year at*	
		church	*Sunday school*	*church*	*Sunday school*
35	$1,500 to $1,799	21.4	11.3	20.6	9.9
94	$1,200 to $1,499	19.8	7.6	13.1	7.0
189	$900 to $1,199	10.3	5.2	9.9	4.6
153	$600 to $899	8.4	4.9	8.1	4.6
10	Below $600	4.8	2.4	7.2	2.4

[8] Results of a study made in twenty-seven counties in Kansas by Professor Eric Englund of the Kansas State Agricultural College, Manhattan, Kansas.

[9] Study made by the Department of Rural Social Organization, Cornell University.

Families with smaller income to spend, with a lower standard of living, with a feeling of inferiority, and who seldom go to church present a great opportunity to the church to show her friendly spirit. These disadvantaged folk are found everywhere.

One might protest that the church is a "spiritual institution" and that these questions of farm income are matters of economics and not of religion. It is true; the church is our one great spiritual agency, and its primary purpose is to spiritualize the lives of men. But those who offer the above criticism are more familiar with life in the city, which is necessarily divided into many strata. The people whom we see on the city streets and in the trolleys we do not often see in our places of business. Likewise, our business associates are not our co-workers in church. Our social friends are still another group.

Out of these many groups and interests the church emerges as the one citadel of our spiritual life and strength. In the city our economic interests, our social engagements, our religious life, are separated in many ways. The opposite is true in the country. Life there is more of a unit. The superintendent of the Sunday school is the neighbor with whom we trade work on threshing and haying days. The elder in the church who passes the elements of the communion on the holiest of days at our church is also the neighbor whose farm joins ours and whose cows get into our cornfield. The president of our missionary society is the wife of our landlord. Not only is the community life in the country a unit, but likewise the family life.

In a certain community, the neighbors bought a pure-

bred bull cooperatively. These same neighbors at length became embroiled in a neighborhood lawsuit over this bull. There were no spiritual elements in this cooperative economic venture, but the lawsuit split the church in two.

In another community the home economics club "fell out" over the making of dress-forms. This should not affect the spiritual life of those people, but the Sunday school in the schoolhouse was immediately disbanded.

Likewise, when the entire economic life of rural America is at low ebb, the spiritual life lags. The discouragement among the farmers and the growing feeling that they receive unfair treatment in such economic matters as taxes, tariff, freight rates, bank loans, and legislative matters, all tend toward the disintegration of their spiritual interests.

Among those farmers who have special economic handicaps the tenant farmers form a group.

THE CHURCH AND LANDLESS MEN

Thirty-eight per cent of the farms in the United States are operated by tenants. Their leases are for one year. About half of these landless men move every year. The first six months of the year they are getting acquainted, the last six months they are getting ready to move. They are seldom made to feel at home in the strange church, and they seldom attend it.

The croppers of the eight hundred tobacco and cotton counties of the South, numbering sometimes two thirds of the population, offer a home mission challenge large enough for any church or denomination. These land

orphans of the cotton and tobacco industries are already lying on our doorsteps, waiting for the spirit of true missionary service to permeate our churches.

While the landless families of the South are unchurched, it must be admitted that they are more often reached by the church than are the tenants in the corn and wheat belt of the North. The survey of Sedgwick County, Kansas, made by the Institute of Social and Religious Research, shows that fifty-six per cent of the farmers in the county are tenants. This should mean that fifty-six per cent of the church members also are tenants; but the survey shows that only eighteen per cent of the church members are tenants! In Clay County, Iowa, where fifty-two per cent of the farm population are tenants, they comprise only twenty-one per cent of the church members. One of the reasons why tenants are not members of the church is that they do not stay in a community long enough to feel themselves to be a part of it.

"Where did you go to church this morning?" I asked an Ohio farmer one Sunday afternoon.

"I haven't begun going since we moved here," he said, apologetically.

"How long have you lived on this farm?"

"Nearly a year," he answered. "I really don't know whether we would be considered church members or not. Nineteen years ago, when we were married over at Big Orchard, my old home, I was an officer in our Presbyterian church there. My father owned a four-hundred-acre farm. He would have been glad to have me stay right there and work for him as long as he lived, but I didn't see it that way. I would rather be a

renter on someone else's farm than a hired hand on my father's farm.

"Down in Springfield, where we moved, we attended the Methodist Church, but we didn't join. We were only renting, and I knew we would soon be moving away.

"We rented another farm and moved farther down the creek. There was another Methodist Church there. They asked us to join. Wish we had, now. I always helped support the minister, and when they bought their new organ, I paid as much as anyone.

"Well, we kept moving, until now I have bought this farm. I suppose our church letters are no good any more. Do you know how we would go about joining now? I suppose we would need to go to the mourners' bench and be converted all over again, wouldn't we?"

A million farmers in the United States move to new homes every year. What an opportunity the church has for serving them! A million families of newcomers with whom the church can make friends! Among this great group lies a big missionary opportunity. Their families and homes may be no different from others in the community, but their unstable leases make their stay in one district uncertain. Why should not the first extension activities of our church be with these newcomers?

THE FOREIGN-SPEAKING PEOPLE ON THE LAND

Another handicapped group in many communities are the newcomers from foreign lands. From my home I can see across the hills to a township that covers an

area of about six miles each way, through which I have often traveled during the past two years. Not once did I ever imagine, as I drove over these roads, that there were foreign-speaking people living on these farms. No one mentioned them. I attended every church in the township and saw no foreigners, nor did I hear them mentioned by any of the church people as they discussed their problems or their program. But a house-to-house visit to the 246 families living on the farms in that township revealed the fact that one third of the population is foreign-born—Bohemians and Finns.

The Bohemians came here in 1907, the Finns in 1911. Of the two groups, the Finns are in the majority. They settled on the poorest lands, some of them on abandoned farms. Their houses resemble the homes of the native Americans, and a casual traveler through such a section would suppose that they all were descendants of the Puritans. But when one is met at the front door of a third of the homes with such a greeting as, "Me no speak English; Joe out in the field," one awakens to the fact that all about us reside these new Americans. Indeed, one third of the new Americans, the foreign-born and their children, live in the rural sections of America. Over one fifth of our rural population is made up of foreign-speaking people.[10]

As farmers, the foreigners are a success, often reclaiming poor farms or practising intensive cultivation on truck farms near cities and towns. The fact that they generally own their farms and are permanently located makes mission work among them more success-

[10] *The Town and Country Church in the United States.* Morse and Brunner.

ful than among the migratory city groups. It is therefore to be hoped that even as our Home Mission agencies have in the past been interested in the foreign-speaking population in the cities they will now give as much consideration to the foreigners who live in the rural districts.

We may test our Christianity by our attitude toward the foreign-speaking family that lives next door. Frank and his mother came from Italy and settled in a certain county-seat town. His attempts at speaking English always made the children laugh at him. His employer usually gave him the hardest work on the job and paid him the lowest wages. But Frank worked hard, for when he left the terraced olive orchards and vine-clad hills of his own sunny Italy, he came to this New World of many opportunities with the purpose of becoming a citizen and making his home here as long as he lived. Full of hope and ambition he took out his first papers. But before long Frank's attitude began to change. He did not resent the fact that the men with whom he worked made fun of him and always gave him the hardest place, but his blood often became hot and his soul bitter when he saw his aged mother neglected and ridiculed. True, she continued to wear her Italian shawl and she did not attempt to learn the language of her adopted country.

In his bitterness and resentment, this young Italian came to the decision that America, this land of his dreams, was giving nothing to him and he would give nothing to her.

"Her laws and her people have done me no good," he said, "so I'll look out for myself." He saw others

making money by breaking the laws, and he decided that he too would sell whiskey and make his fortune. Now the man who came here with such lofty ambitions and high hopes is one of this town's bootleggers. His case probably is not exceptional, for we are told by the Anti-saloon League that eighty-three per cent of our rum-runners are aliens.

Two blocks east of Frank's home lived the president of the woman's home missionary society. One day in June, much to her distress, an Italian family moved into the house next door to her. It was bad enough to have such people only two blocks away! Must she live the rest of her life so close to Italians? Must her little girl grow up with Italian playmates? How could she stand it? Her anxiety and disheartenment grew. She saw no way out of her situation.

The summer passed, however, and with the coming of autumn, the church work resumed its usual routine, and she was made teacher of the home mission study class. The first and second chapters of the book had already been studied before she realized that this book, the theme of which was our treatment of the foreign-speaking people in our midst, referred to her. She had been telling the young women in her class how to show a Christian spirit toward "our immigrant neighbors," while she continued to hate her Italian neighbor who lived next door.

"I'm nothing but a hypocrite!" she thought. "I must change my own attitude or I must resign my office." After a time she told her class that she could not finish the course. Thus she turned her back on her problem but did not solve it.

Meanwhile, she began to go over to her neighbor's house occasionally, running in with doughnuts or other things, just to show her friendliness.

"I'll be her friend, I'll be a Christian neighbor," she determined. But the Italian woman acted in a distant and strange manner; and her husband, too, passed the house without smiling or even looking toward the missionary president.

One day the American woman was getting ready for an evening social event and faced the problem of completing a dress before night. Knowing the beautiful work which her neighbor did, she took the dress to her in the morning and asked her if she would finish it. That night when she went for it, the dress was done, and as the Italian woman handed over her day's work, she said, with tears in her eyes, "This has been the happiest day since we moved here. Now I feel that I am your neighbor. Before, you did things for me. Today, I have worked for you. Now we are neighbors."

The missionary president tucked back the money which she was about to offer in payment for the day's work, for money is not needed when neighbors help each other. Today, if that Italian husband passes her a dozen times in one day, he always lifts his hat and smiles a friendly recognition.

Every fifth family in rural America is foreign born, and, like this Italian household, each is in need of Christian neighborliness. One of the Italian families cited above was touched by the church; the other was not. One is learning our Christian ideals; the other is trying to break our laws.

Multiply these two actual cases many times and we

have all about us throughout rural America a great missionary challenge confronting the entire church. The churches in the towns, with organized Sunday-school classes, with active young people's groups, with women's missionary societies imbued with Christ's last great command of discipling all nations, these churches are those who must accept the challenge of extending their influence among these untouched groups in every county in America.

CHURCHES BRING TOWN AND COUNTRY TOGETHER

The centralization of rural institutions is the tendency of the present times. Improved methods of transportation and a decrease of farm population have accelerated this movement. As a rule, the centralized church should be in the towns, which is the center for the other social institutions. But in order to get the farmers to unite with the town churches a new spirit of cooperation must be developed between the town and country.

Farmers talk about "the graft in Wall Street," and city people talk about "the narrowness of Main Street." Let us examine this distrust between merchants and farmers. Farmers say, "The middlemen rob us. We sell them a barrel of apples for $3.00 and later we see it offered on the market for $6.00." City people say, "Farmers are always complaining about being hard up. Their income isn't large, but they raise all they eat and they never figure that in. We have to pay for every bushel of potatoes we eat."

Going back to the apples again—it costs the middle-

man, to handle that barrel of apples, besides the $3.00 he pays the farmer, 30 cents for shrinkage, 35 cents for grading, 65 cents for storage, 50 cents for freight, and 50 cents for selling; a total of $5.30. The retail merchant gets the 70 cents for selling and for assuming the risk of the market, and the $6.00 is accounted for. The middleman did not make undue profits at all.

Let us go back to the bushel of potatoes which we so often hear costs the farmer nothing. For the average bushel of potatoes, the farmer works one hour. He works a farm horse one hour, and there is wear and tear on some piece of farm machinery for about the same period of time. His seed and fertilizer cost him fifteen cents, his interest on investment three cents, his taxes one cent. In addition, he has spent small amounts for sprays, seed treatments, and for various other purposes. For this bushel of potatoes in 1922 he received forty cents; in 1923, seventy cents; in 1924, thirty-five cents; and in 1925, over one dollar. The city man as a rule does not realize what it costs the farmer to raise a bushel of potatoes. And so most of this distrust is because one group does not appreciate the other's problems.

In an effort to remove this distrust which exists between the farmers and the merchants, the pastor of one village church visited seventy-five farm homes within a radius of two and a half miles of that village. Through these visits he found that only five families of the entire seventy-five attended any of the three village churches. This pastor then changed his regular Sunday evening church service once a month to what was termed "Farmers' Night," when he carried out a program that

would be of special interest to farmers. The result of this new type of service was that farmers began to come in increasing numbers to all the church services. So much mutual interest and confidence sprang up in place of the former distrust between the farmers and the merchants that one year later these farmers asked the pastor to serve as chairman of the program committee to arrange for their county-wide annual "Farmers' Picnic."

A splendid place for a city church to hold its socials in the summer time is on the lawn of some farm home. A farm house, on a winter evening, offers a welcome place for a social for the young people from the city church. A men's class of seventy-five people, in a city church of 1,400 members, holds its monthly socials in the surrounding rural churches and thus establishes many friendly contacts. These friendly contacts between strong central churches and the weakening churches in the near-by outlying sections will no doubt prepare the way for the consolidation of these churches, which is becoming more and more inevitable. Last year members of the Geddes Grange, in New York State, traveled 8,700 miles in helping other granges in Madison, Onondaga, and Oswego Counties to put on their third and fourth degrees. A town church which would likewise travel so far to assist small rural churches would set a splendid example for the rest of us.

A Baptist church in a certain county-seat town in the North sends automobiles out to bring the rural children in to its Sunday schools just the same as the centralized schools bring their children together. A Louisiana church uses the same school busses on Sunday

which its consolidated school uses on week days. This progressive church in the Southland is thus providing as well for the religious education of its children as it is for their secular training.

Last winter half of the 176 community meetings which I conducted under the auspices of the farm and home bureau were held in churches. The church buildings were made available for the use of the farmers and, in every case but one, without any charge, even for fuel. Many churches, as well as banks and chambers of commerce, are putting farmers on their official boards. This all shows a desire to bring the rural and the city people closer together; and all this gives the town church a chance to serve the surrounding rural population.

City people in the past have invited the farmers to come to their churches. They have also given the farmers an opportunity to help with the finances. Since this method has not succeeded, let us try the opposite plan—of having city church members go to the farmers. Let us put the "serve" in our rural surveys, making all of our churches truly missionary organizations in practise as well as in theory.

"The evangelization of the world in this generation," is a phrase that fills us with hope, but when this comes to be an actual reality, it will be an account of each church evangelizing the people within its borders and winning them, one by one, to the Redeemer of the world, who, Himself, selected his disciples, one at a time, from the people in his neighboring villages.

YOUNG PEOPLE IN AN EXTENSION PROGRAM

One of the best sources of missionary workers in the town and country community is the young people. In many cases the church is not challenging them with a big enough job. It is the common opinion among many young people that the church is run by and for the older members. They claim that the adults even select the best rooms in the church and the best hours on the Sunday program, leaving whatever time may remain for the young people's meeting and the Sunday school. Why not challenge the young people with a larger part in the church's responsibility for Christianizing rural America?

Some village churches are organizing what they call "auto squads," composed of young people who do religious extension work in the outskirts of the parish. These auto squads bring the children in to the daily vacation church school; they visit the sick and the shut-ins; they conduct social and recreational meetings in outlying farm homes; and they even conduct meetings in schoolhouses and small churches.

One of the best examples of this religious extension work by young people is found among the Epworth Leagues of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in Missouri. The Epworth League of a city church takes the responsibility not only of organizing new chapters in rural churches, but of making more efficient those that are already there. For example, the Epworth League of Columbia, Missouri, became responsible for visiting the rural leagues in three counties. One of the chapters in St. Joseph would think nothing of

traveling thirty miles out into the country to visit a rural church.

Such extension work was organized by districts. For example, the chapters in the Nevada district in Missouri were divided into three zones, a strong city league being responsible for each zone. Neosha took the hill section, Joplin the lead- and zinc-mining communities, and Rich Hill the farming country. Each of these city leagues held rallies once a month in one of these rural churches, or in a convenient grove, or on some near-by lake, to which representatives from all the leagues in their zone were invited. For example, the Rich Hill League had in it two "flying squadrons." On Sunday nights, in addition to holding a meeting in their home church, they sent two automobile loads out, one "squadron" in one direction to organize a new chapter and the other somewhere else to strengthen a weak organization. In each squadron there was one pianist, one person to lead the singing, and one representative for each of the four departments, and for the junior and the intermediate work. In this district there were six leagues when this extension work was begun. Three years later there were fourteen chapters, and in 1925 they had increased to thirty-one. The attendance at many of the regular meetings has been trebled. Many of these churches now have Junior and Intermediate Leagues to hold the younger children and serve as "feeders" to the Epworth League and to the church. As many as two hundred young people often attend these zone rallies. Such a plan is putting into practise this missionary program for the local community.

The Master calls as clearly for missionary recruits in

every town or city church to help in the evangelization of the outlying countryside as to go to China or to Mexico or to Alaska. Many who are not permitted to go to distant fields can work in the unevangelized districts which surround every town and city in the homeland. Nothing will increase our interest in foreign missions more than to do missionary work at home.

A multitude of rural communities in which the church is wielding only an insignificant influence, are simply waiting for those of us who hear this call to respond and say, "Here am I, send me!"

A RURAL CHURCH THAT CAPTURED A COMMUNITY

Nestling among the New Hampshire hills at the foot of Corbin Park is the pretty little village of Grantham in which is located a church about which you should know. Originally made beautiful by the hands of a kind Providence, this isolated township had been left desolate and ruined by the hands of ungrateful, unappreciative man. Many of the farms had been abandoned, and the others were occupied by a floating population who were here today and gone tomorrow, no one knew where. Not only had the population dwindled; but, far worse, ideals had migrated, community spirit had faded, and the place had almost lost its soul. In the country stores were the boxes, the chairs, and the card table, about which unwholesome town gossip, mingled with tobacco smoke, stunted the lives of the oncoming generation.

The little church seemed powerless in the midst of the prevailing conditions. It had struggled on in the

face of a receding population and had been left like driftwood in the midst of indifference and ungodliness. Its Epworth League died; later its Sunday school; and at length, its ladies' aid society disbanded; then the little church was left without a pastor. It had fought a valiant fight, but, like many another country church in rural America, it had failed. Its membership had dwindled from two score to half a dozen, only three of whom could be called active, and these were well grayed with age. Long before this came to pass the church had lost its grip upon the town. One by one its members had dropped out, until only the "loyal few" remained. Someone described the church as being "the most unpopular thing in town."

The story might have ended here, and this church, like many others in the less favored parts of rural America, might have been listed by the statisticians as "another dead country church."

What minister would select such a field? Situated several miles from the railroad, with no electric lights, no high school, no local doctor or district nurse, but surrounded by many social evils, and religious indifference, it presented no attractions. No man would seek such a field who was not driven by a genuine missionary purpose, and no program could succeed here unless it were infiltrated with missionary motives. But such a man came, and with such a motive!

He found only the few aged and discouraged members, no leaders, no adequate income, no organizations, and no building except an auditorium in the second story of the old town hall—nothing, in fact, but the need of a missionary gospel. He started his work

among the 150 children and young people. With his class of boys, he rented an old empty store building. Six months later, when he was forced to vacate this, his boys obtained the use of an old garage. As his work grew, the need for more equipment became a pressing one. At length, together with some big-hearted men and his growing organizations of young people, he began to build a community house. His national board of home missions encouraged him by the small gift of $500. To this the local people, from their scanty incomes, added all they could. The old barn at the parsonage was built over, an old store building was purchased, and, with the lumber from these, the community house was started. Everyone helped with the labor. As a result, a revival of community pride began, with the church as the center. The last three years have seen not only the growth of this building, with its auditorium, stage, dining-hall, kitchen, reading-room, workshop, motion-picture machine, and athletic equipment, but numerous dependable organizations, with plans and programs, have also arisen as an outgrowth of this impelling ideal of service.

A tennis court now occupies the place where the old barn stood. The Stars and Stripes float on top of a thirty-six foot flagpole on the very spot where the old store building stood before. The service at the flag raising, where local citizens made short speeches on the meaning of the flag and law obedience, was a dramatic event, long to be remembered.

The varied program of activities in the community house is best indicated by the report for the year showing the attendance at meetings.

	Total Attendance		*Total Attendance*
Suppers and banquets	699	Club meetings	450
Dramas and plays	812	Small children for play	165
Play festivals	260	Visitors	150
Concerts and conventions	490	Religious services (Not including those held in the church)	310
Health conferences	110		
Motion pictures and lectures	1,720		

Total attendance at all meetings, 5,166

Financial Statement

Received in offerings and door fees	$257.16
Paid out for motion picture films, fuel, and repairs	247.60
Balance	$9.56

One of the unique things about the program of this church has been the cooperation with other agencies. The play festivals have been held in cooperation with the Y. M. C. A. The health conferences and clinics were conducted with the help of nurses and doctors from the State Department of Health. The women of the farm bureau assisted with the sewing classes. The State Forestry Department and the junior achievement bureau are other cooperating agencies.

One would need to visit in the homes along the 130 miles of country roads on this charge to find how far the influence of this church has extended. In a dozen of these homes are children who have had their adenoids and tonsils removed, although their parents could not afford to pay for such an operation. In a score more of these homes, children are taking music lessons. Three fourths of the families and nine tenths of the boys and girls belong to some of the organizations of

this church. The church membership has steadily grown, nearly doubling during the past year.

The varied activities of this church are a spiritual ministry. Sin is being driven out and in its place have come saved men and a saved community. There is faith where there was suspicion before; there is goodwill where hatreds lingered; there is Christian service where before selfish motives prevailed. To repeat this type of ministry throughout rural America is a challenge to all of us.

A MISSIONARY PROGRAM FOR A LOCAL COMMUNITY

Many churches are becoming true missionary organizations. In fact, our "other-world religion" seems to be changing into the "other-man religion." We used to shoot past a boy in order to hit his soul; but now the church is finding that to win one, it must capture both.

A parish house offers a great opportunity for a church to be of service to all classes. In a certain village of 1,500 people are three churches—a Roman Catholic, a Baptist, and a Methodist. If one of these two competitive Protestant churches should build a parish house, it would seem natural to use it to strengthen its own denomination at the expense of the other churches. As a matter of fact, when the Methodists built their $13,000 community house, some of the other denominations thought it would be used as a "proselyting project."

This parish house is well equipped. It has an assembly room for lectures, a stage for home-talent plays, a machine for motion pictures, a kitchen and dining-

room for suppers, equipment for volley-ball and basket-ball, and adequate rooms for clubs. How easy it would be for this church to use such equipment to strengthen its own organizations at the expense of the other churches! But, on the contrary, the parish house has been made available for all groups and organizations!

If the high school uses the building, it pays only a small fee to help meet the operating expenses and for the time the students occupy it, it is their building. The Baptists use it for their functions. The daily vacation Bible school became a cooperative project, carried on by the Baptists and the Methodists. One hundred and seven children between the ages of four and fourteen were enrolled, including Methodists, Baptists, and Catholics.

In order that the athletic events should not seem to be Methodist activities, the pastor has organized them entirely on a "community basis." During the past two winters he has had a community basket-ball league in which fifty young men participated. In addition to this league, there were three teams composed of girls and younger boys representing the churches. The slogan in all the athletics, "A chance for all who wish to play," indicates the attitude of the church in serving all classes.

The Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts are likewise community-wide. The Catholic priest has urged his young people to join these organizations.

"I find that when it is known that the church is really trying to serve all the people in the community, cooperation is freely given," is the way the pastor explained the good-will among the churches.

"We give the young people of the Baptist church the same privileges in using the parish house that we give to the Methodists. We started the project on the basis of the needs of our own people, but the larger community idea has now taken the place of the denominational emphasis."

The Ministerial Association—growing out of the community spirit—has outlined a community program wherein all the churches, high school, and other organizations cooperate to build a social and a religious life capable of developing the very best manhood and womanhood. These groups are also working together to avoid all unnecessary overlapping in the various activities of the town.

The district superintendent called this parish house "a beehive of activity." You may ask if, with all the many social activities, the spiritual welfare of the church is neglected.

"The leaders of this church," said a local resident, "have always kept uppermost in their minds that the greatest task of the church is to teach religion. They have used the many social activities to that end."

"I know of no community," said the pastor, "that is more friendly to matters of religion than this."

A Sunday school of 272 members, an Epworth League of sixty-six members, a week-night training school, and a daily vacation Bible school with twenty-two teachers are evidences of the church's religious life. The fact that the membership of the Baptist church has nearly doubled, along with the doubling of the Methodist roll, is evidence of the broad, community-wide objectives of the program of this church. The

business men's volley-ball team, or the young men's home-talent play, or any of the other social activities do not detract from the spiritual service of this church. The local community program does not interfere with world service interests.

This missionary, or extension, program of a church in its local community is one of the ways of putting into practise the words of Jesus, when he said, "Whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Our greatest need in rural America is not more churches, but an enlargement of the work of each church in its local parish.

There is considerable discouragement among rural folk due to economic conditions. This has been in part the cause of the lack of interest in the church. The changed social conditions and attitudes mentioned in Chapter I have also taken away the farmer's interest from his church.

The tenant farmer feels himself less a part of the local community and therefore takes less interest in the local institutions. In many parts of the country he moves often. This means that he is likely to be a newcomer and therefore needs special attention from the church.

The ratio of foreign-speaking people to native-born Americans on the land is increasing. They usually own their farms and stay in a community. Those who are

not reached by the church are likely to be a destructive force to our American Christian ideals.

A great amount of extension work or missionary work in each local parish is needed at the present time. Church people must go out to the homes of families yet unreached instead of simply waiting for those people to come to the church.

Communities where the religious need is great and where the church has fallen into disrepute respond quickly to a church program in which the service motive is uppermost.

The first step for every church which seeks to enlarge its program is to make a careful study of its local parish in order to find out who is not being reached.

One of the best sources of supply of missionary workers for the local community is the young people.

Without in any way lessening its emphasis on spiritual matters, every church to succeed at the present time must put on a social program. This is one of the ways of enlarging its influence in its local parish.

A parish house offers a great opportunity for a church to be of service to all classes and all ages. Such a building, however, when owned by one church, in a community where there are other churches, must not be used to win young people away from the other churches. The social program in a parish house should usually be made a cooperative affair. Also the parish house should be made available at times for the use of the other churches.

"PLAY FESTIVALS" ARE A PART OF THE CHURCH PROGRAM IN GRANTHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE. IN YEARS PAST GAMBLING AND PROFANITY IN THE COUNTRY STORE SHAPED THE SOCIAL AND MORAL IDEALS OF THE YOUTH OF THIS VILLAGE. THE CHURCH IN RURAL AMERICA IS SUBSTITUTING DIRECTED PLAY FOR PRISONS, AND IS USING THE ROPE WITH WHICH WE USED TO HANG PEOPLE TO MAKE PLAYGROUND SWINGS.

THE BOYS ABOVE CLEANED OUT THE OLD DRUG STORE IN GRANTHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE, WHERE THE LAW HAD FREQUENTLY BEEN BROKEN. TEACHING RELIGION BY "EXPRESSIONAL ACTIVITIES" IS INTERESTING WHERE RELIGIOUS NEEDS ARE OBVIOUS. THE BOY SCOUTS OF SALEM, NEW HAMPSHIRE (BELOW), AND ALL OTHER ATHLETICS IN THAT TOWN, ARE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, WITH NO SECTARIAN FENCES.

THE PARISH HOUSE IN SALEM, NEW HAMPSHIRE, OWNED BY ONE DENOMINATION, IS OPERATED JOINTLY BY ALL THE CHURCHES. THE YOUNG PEOPLE ASSOCIATE THE CHURCH WITH THEIR GOOD TIMES. THE HOUSE IS EQUIPPED WITH A STAGE FOR DRAMATICS AND PAGEANTRY. THE YOUNG MEN BELOW RECENTLY PRESENTED THE PLAY, "THE HUT."

THE METHODISTS, BAPTISTS, AND CATHOLICS IN SALEM UNITED IN CONDUCTING A DAILY VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL. ONE OF THE PASTORS SAID, "I FIND THAT WHEN IT IS KNOWN THAT THE CHURCH IS REALLY TRYING TO SERVE ALL THE PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY, COOPERATION IS FREELY GIVEN."

IV

LEADERSHIP FOR THE NEW RURAL CHURCH

The rural church for the new day, with its enlarged program and its enlarged parish, will not run itself. It must have leaders. Hence, it must make its appeal to youth.

Rural church progress is not a question of machinery, but of personalities. The sociologist can clarify the laws of social progress, the economist can interpret the material influences on social institutions, but nothing of great value is accomplished until some stalwart young man or young woman steps forward and says, "I will undertake that task."

Wherever rural religion has declined and the children in a community are growing up untouched by the regenerating gospel of Christ, wherever the church house is closed, that community is the silent testimony to the fact that some youth either did not hear or did not heed the call to serve. On the other hand, wherever individuals and communities have been born again and the church has become the center of community life, we always find behind such progress some one who has prepared himself to become a leader. The future of the hundred thousand rural churches in America will be determined by the attitude the young men and the young women of today take to this whole question of religious leadership. What shall we do about this? Shall we respond to this call? Shall we

prepare to become professional or lay leaders and do our part in making the countryside Christian?

"We have no leaders," is the universal explanation of rural church decline. It is necessary to attend only one meeting of country ministers and hear them discuss their problems to become convinced that the greatest need of the rural church today is leaders. Many of the workers who have been trained in rural churches move to the city, while those who remain in the country grow old in the harness, and no younger men rise up to take their places.

Not long ago, I was invited to a rural church to give a demonstration in games and play for church-social programs. Imagine my position when I arrived and found nine elderly women and four women who were past middle age constituting the total group to participate in these active games and to direct this church's recreational program! Young people do not assume their places of leadership, and yet they complain that the church is run by a few old folks.

A progressive young farmer, in speaking about country churches, recently said to me, "The rural church began to lose when its leadership fell into the hands of the stand-pat group. The stand-patters in the church usually pay about three fourths of the minister's salary," he continued to explain. "They are the older members, and they hold all the offices and are given all the responsibility for leadership."

Whether we agree with him or not, we must admit that much greater attention should be given to this task of training *new* leaders. Youth wants something new—new activities, new plans, new leaders. They like their

pastor, as a rule, but are most pleased when he is furnishing them with new ventures in church administration. One very faithful and loyal young woman, in commenting recently on the work of her church, said, "Our church seems to be going back. Our pastor is a good man and a good preacher, but he never does anything new."

Whatever view we may take of this subject, we come back, sooner or later, to the conclusion that new leaders are needed in the average country church, and that the training of such leaders is our most urgent present task.

"Why are so many rural churches devoid of leaders?" you ask. Let us see the answers to this and also to the question, Why is this the most important task in the whole field of rural church progress?

"I worked on my evangelistic program for a year, and as a result took in thirty-six new members," said a rural pastor. "But within the next six months I gave letters to fifteen people, who were moving into the city. Those fifteen who transferred to city churches included some of my best leaders. And now my church is almost without leaders." This situation recurs in nearly all rural communities.

"The trouble with our church," said a layman, "is that we have no one to go ahead with anything, no one to take the lead. It seems as if our best members have all died or moved away."

A large men's class in a town church went seven miles out into the country, recently, to help a struggling rural congregation. The men from the city were optimistic about everything. They sang songs, led games,

and made speeches. They told about the success of their own church and their loyalty to the pastor. The country people just sat still and listened. When the discouraged rural pastor was asked about the "problems" of his parish, he admitted that his church had lost its leaders. Then some one of the visitors began to count the members who had gone from this one, small country community to the growing city church, seven miles away. To the surprise of all, it was discovered that in this adult class of seventy-five men from the city, there were more men who had formerly been members of this one rural church than now remained behind in it.

At the subsequent annual meeting of the ministers of the denomination to which these churches belonged, the city pastor was complimented on the growth of his church, but the rural pastor was moved to another field, in the hope that he would be more successful there. How important this question of local leadership is to church progress!

We will agree, then, that if rural churches are to succeed, young people in these rural communities must be trained to become religious leaders; and also young people from town or city churches must likewise be trained to have a part in this great national church task. Let us, therefore, study together the qualities of leadership necessary and some of the methods the church may take in developing these qualities.

Most of us recognize a good leader when we see one, even though we may be unable to define accurately the term, leadership. Perhaps the best way to study the question of leadership is to observe its successful prac-

tise or failure in others, and then to examine ourselves to see wherein we act, successfully or unsuccessfully.

A GOOD LEADER PUTS RESPONSIBILITY ON OTHERS

One day I watched the chairman of a county organization of farm women as she presided at a county-wide rally. She spoke much about her part as president of the organization, and recited the things she wanted the other women to do. As she introduced the speakers, she reminded them that her program was so crowded that she could not give them much time. At the dinner table she told some of us how much she enjoyed helping these rural women.

"Although I live in the city, I'm rurally minded," she said, as she continued to tell us of her work as a county leader. While she was thus exploiting her excellent leadership, a nominating committee in session in the next room was trying to find some way to get rid of her in order to elect a new president.

From this gathering of a hundred women I went to a similar meeting in another county. The county president sat in the rear of the room, while another person, whom she had selected, presided. Near the close of the meeting someone arose and said, "I think we should hear from our county chairman before we adjourn."

After some hesitation, this humble leader arose and expressed her appreciation of the program just completed and then added, "I hope that you all understand that the great success of this work in our county is not due to me, nor to what little I have done as your president, but rather to the untiring efforts of the entire

committee and to the splendid cooperation we have had on the part of our 1,200 members throughout the county. I only want to say that it is a great joy to work with all of you."

The organization in the first county was failing; in the second it was growing rapidly. The first woman was interested in her own leadership, the second was interested in the purpose of her organization. The first woman lived in the city, and directed farm women because she considered herself "rurally minded." The second woman did not know the meaning of the phrase, "rurally minded"; she lived on a poultry farm, and she liked people and was devoted to her cause; more than that, she gave others credit for their share in the organization. This quality of placing responsibility upon others and giving them credit for what they do is one of the traits that distinguish all great leaders.

A big farmers' cooperative is just now in danger of disintegration because of lack of confidence in its management. One of its foremost officials, in his addresses, often tells what splendid business acumen he himself has brought to the organization.

Compare with such leadership the man who was for so long general manager of the California Fruit Growers Exchange. The men who worked with Mr. G. Harold Powell in California considered him more as a colleague than as a boss, and always appreciated his great fairness and his unfailing willingness to give credit where credit was due. The membership of this organization grew under his management until it included 10,500 growers, or seventy-three per cent of the citrus-fruits industry. Mr. Powell often said, "If the

growers have confidence in the general policies because they themselves help to make those policies, they will be loyal to their organization in bad times as well as in good." In one of his bulletins, Mr. Powell says, "The basis of the cooperative organization is men. Capital cannot cooperate; products cannot cooperate; only men can cooperate."

He therefore had equal regard for the small landowner with little capital and for the large grower. For the most important positions in his organization, Mr. Powell always kept a second man in training. He never complained about the "lack of leaders"; he always had someone trained and waiting for each position. Because ten thousand farmers so gladly followed him, it does not seem amiss to conclude that this policy of putting responsibility on others and of giving them credit for what they do, is one of the marks of successful leadership in churchwork as well as in cooperative marketing.

No one knows how many potential leaders there may be in the average rural community who would respond to the call if responsibility were placed upon them and if someone put confidence in them. Long ago a group of Georgia farmers met and discussed how they could make cotton pay. The plant grew well in Georgia, but it took too much labor to get the seeds out of the cotton boll. Mrs. Greene was present at this meeting, and while her neighbors were discussing the possibility of getting a machine for seeding cotton, she said, "There is a very handy young man at my house. I would like to have him try to make such a machine."

Although this young man knew little about cotton

culture, he knew a good deal about machinery, and all winter he worked on the task set for him by Mrs. Greene. When spring came, Eli Whitney had constructed the cotton-gin. Mrs. Greene is not usually mentioned in accounts of the invention, but her confidence in young Whitney was no doubt the incentive which helped him most. And so we find that real leaders put responsibility upon others, have confidence in them, and give them credit for what they do.

A GOOD LEADER APPEALS TO PEOPLE TO HELP OUT

One spring day I observed the attempts of a county club agent to get some women to take charge of girls' clubs. He went to a certain home and knocked timidly, as if he were trespassing. No one came to the door, and after waiting some time, he knocked again, louder this time. When, after a third knock the woman of the house appeared at the door, she apologized for not coming sooner, saying that she "had heard a little noise but thought it was only the wind blowing." The club agent stood on the porch rather hesitatingly. Before he got around to speaking, the woman, an energetic person, thinking he must be a pedler, said abruptly, "I'm busy washing, and I haven't time to look at your goods."

Thus aroused, the club agent told his business. "I'm looking for a leader," he said. "We've been trying to organize a club of girls, and I can't get a leader for them. Nobody will take them."

"Well, I can't either," she said. "I'm too busy." And so the conversation ended.

Let us suppose that the club agent had knocked at the door as though he had a most important mission. When the lady of the house appeared, suppose he had immediately interested her in this group of girls and what they wanted and needed, and then suppose he had said, "I have come to get you to help out with a club!" She might have undertaken the task. Most people do not want to be "leaders"; but nearly everyone is willing to "help out" when needed.

One day, while I was riding over the hills with a young farmer, we fell to discussing this question of leadership.

"I feel that we in the churches often do not make the right approaches to people," said he. "Our people in this community are all good people, good moral people, but I'm sorry to say they don't take much interest in the church."

"How could they be interested to become more active church workers?" I asked this young church official.

"I believe that instead of simply asking them to attend and join," he replied, "we should appeal to them to help out. I believe more people would come to church if they thought they could be of some use. I'm sorry to say, people don't take to the idea, so much as they used to, of simply saving their own souls.

"We had a barn raising not long ago. A neighbor bought a ready-cut barn from a factory. The word was passed around the neighborhood that men were needed to help put it up. Fifty men turned out and worked hard all day. They all seemed willing to do just anything that was asked of them. You might say they almost risked their lives up on top of that barn; but

some of those same men would be scared to death in church."

"What are some of the things," I asked, "that you would suggest that the church should do, in order to get these men to help out and do something?"

"It seems to me," he replied, "in addition to our regular program, we might have community singing one night a month and ask different people to furnish special numbers. Then I would like to see more community play and games, and various people asked to take charge of them. I believe play is just what our people need. They all seem so discouraged. Then we might discuss civic and agricultural subjects at midweek forums. Some men who would absolutely refuse to lead a prayer meeting would be glad to talk on these subjects.

"Of course, the business of the church is to save men and communities. The question is, how to go about it. If we could get people to doing something for the church, they would be more loyal to it. I believe they would be interested if they thought they were really helping."

If this young man is correct, a good leader is one who enlists people in church activities by appealing to them to help out in a big program, rather than by simply asking them to attend meetings.

A GOOD LEADER IS SINCERE

"Country people hate sham," is the way an agricultural extension worker began to explain that one of the important qualities of a rural leader is sincerity.

A hundred or more farmers and their families were once attending a community meeting which was being held under the auspices of a milk-marketing cooperative. A versatile speaker was present to address the children on the value of milk. He showed them his strong right arm and beat upon his full chest and said that milk was the source of his good health and of his strong constitution. I ate dinner with him after the speech, and was surprised to find that he drank coffee instead of milk; and he even admitted that he never drank milk in his life if he could help it. Such a man might possibly be a good promoter, away from home, but it is quite doubtful if he could be a good local leader, because he was not sincere.

A certain rural pastor from a four-point circuit isolated in the hills of Pennsylvania is surprising all his friends by his sudden rise to the position of a national rural church secretary. Hundreds of letters come to his office from rural pastors and laymen, telling him their problems and asking for his counsel. All grades of officials in his denomination put confidence in him. What is the explanation of this man's sudden rise from a "six-hundred-dollar parish" to the office of superintendent of his national department of rural work?

Those who have known him best have not failed to see his whole-hearted sincerity. Before installing a Delco lighting system in his church, he first tried one out in his own house. He led each of his four churches in building social halls, using the first pick and shovel himself in getting the work started. The teachers came for miles around to cooperate with him in his community program, but he first took a unique service to

them. When he was called to Boston University to take the chair of Rural Leadership, he settled on a little New England farm in order to keep close to the life of rural people. While there, he helped pastors to remodel their churches and parsonages, as well as their church programs; but first he rebuilt his own house. Before he makes a speech about benevolences, he cuts down his own office expenses. His genuine sincerity has won people to him and made them eager to follow his leadership.

Sincerity was the quality which stood out in Moses when he said, "Forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy Book which Thou hast written." People are eager to follow leaders who are sincere. It is useless to start out to become a religious leader until one has himself heard "the still small voice" and has yielded his will to the transforming power of the Savior of men.

A GOOD LEADER HAS FAITH IN HIS CAUSE

Not long ago I was invited to help a little rural hamlet to build a school playground. A certain woman there had so urged the necessity of a playground that she had been appointed chairman of a committee to arrange for one. But there were many difficulties to encounter. On one side of the little one-room schoolhouse lived an old bachelor who was not interested in the children's play. Across the road lived an elderly woman who threatened to "keep the boys' ball if it ever rolls over into my yard." Being afraid they would lose their ball, the boys had stopped playing with it.

The new chairman raised some money, went to the woman who lived on the third side of the schoolhouse and attempted to buy some of her land for a playground. She refused to sell, saying that she wanted to keep the land "for a pasture for her cow." She seemed to think more of cows than she did of the forty-six school children.

But the chairman kept at her task until she had arranged for the playground and bought the lumber for swings, seesaws, and various pieces of playground apparatus. She was obliged, next, to get some help in building the equipment. She asked the first man she saw to come and help with the work.

"No. Those children need to learn to work, not to play," was his answer.

She asked the next man she met, and his reply was similar.

"I'll help do anything but make play apparatus," he said. "They didn't have any of that stuff when I was in school."

The next man she asked said he would help if the weather were not so bad. Then she went down to the little country store, where six men sat around the stove. As she entered, they sneeringly inquired, "Well, have you got your playground built yet?" But none of them offered to help. After a time, however, three rough young fellows volunteered to help her. Others came later, and by night a splendid school playground was completed.

This woman lives in a little farmhouse under the side of a hill in that isolated community, but she loves children and recognizes their need for play. Would

you call her a leader? If a leader is one who sees the need for something to be done and gets people to help do it, she is a real leader, although her name is not known outside her community. Every community and every church is in need of such leaders, people who believe so thoroughly in their cause that they will not stop until their task is accomplished.

In the adjoining county two men were sent out to secure members for the county farm bureau. They heard so many complaints and objections while they were asking men for the annual dues that they decided the organization was not what they thought it was, so they themselves came home and withdrew from its membership. They did not have enough faith in their cause to carry them through a two days' canvass!

The neighbors in Tazewell County, Illinois, laughed at James Reid because he was so particular in selecting his seed corn. But he believed thoroughly that he could produce a better variety of corn, and, after forty years of experimenting, Reid's "Yellow Dent" corn won first prize at the National Corn Belt Exposition. According to *The Country Gentleman* (1920), "James Reid did more than any other man to put the Corn Belt on the map of America." It is freely admitted that this plain farmer, who carried a sack of seed corn from Ohio to Illinois in a covered wagon, has put more millions of dollars into the pockets of farmers of the corn belt than has any other man. If we can have in every church at least one layman or minister who will exercise the same faith in raising our world service gifts that Mr. Reid had in raising seed corn, our great benevolent program will move forward again.

Every church needs leaders who have so much faith in their cause that they are not afraid to ask people to support it.

One day Mr. Hoard, a Wisconsin farmer, decided that his state could never produce cheese profitably until the railroads gave the producers a different freight rate to the Atlantic seaboard. It was then costing them two and a half cents a pound to get their cheese to New York. Mr. Hoard went to Chicago and interviewed the representatives of all the different railroads; but when he told them what he wanted, they only laughed at him. The last man he went to see asked gruffly, "What do you want, sir?"

"I represent a million pounds of cheese seeking an outlet on the Atlantic seaboard at rates that will allow us to compete with other cheese-producing sections," said Mr. Hoard. "I want you to make a rate of one cent a pound from Wisconsin to the Atlantic seaboard in refrigerator cars, and I also want you to send a refrigerator car to Watertown, Wisconsin, and to come yourself to a meeting of our Dairy Board next week and explain the advantages and workings of such an arrangement."

"Is there anything else you want?" asked the railway official.

"Not just now," replied the Wisconsin farmer.

Mr. Hoard's faith in his cause convinced the transportation agent, who complied with his request; and Wisconsin became a great dairy state. Mr. Hoard owns a magazine which has since become the leading dairy paper of the world, and goes to 75,000 dairy farmers each week.

The church, like the dairy industry, must have men who believe thoroughly in their cause.

A young man in the foothills of Virginia determined to improve the cradle method of cutting wheat. On a hot July day a machine which he had made cut six acres of oats. He had to wait a year before he could try it out again, and then he went eighteen miles away to find a field level enough on which to use his new reaper. Young Mr. McCormick advertised that he would sell his machine for $50, but he waited seven years before he made a single sale; he waited two more years before he sold the second machine. Such was the beginning of the International Harvester Company. All great movements are, likewise, the achievement of men of indomitable faith.

A group of men were discussing the missionary program of their denomination, when one pastor said, "Our church decided not to put on a campaign for benevolences this year."

He was asked how such a decision was reached.

"I brought it up before my church officials," he explained, "and one of my most influential members opposed it; so I let it drop."

But the great missionary cause, as we see it today, is the achievement of men who, regardless of adverse votes in official board meetings, have had an unconquerable faith in the value of the missionary conquest of the world.

Not very far from the town where this man decided not to put on a campaign for benevolences because one man had opposed it, is the state agricultural experiment station. There, in twenty-five years, Mr. W. H. Jordan

has increased his staff from 15 workers to 477, all as a result of his indomitable devotion to his cause. Before he got the appropriation for his new administration building, he presented the proposition to ten successive legislatures of his state, and the appropriation bill was vetoed seven times by six successive governors. All progress is the result of the faith of a great leader in his cause.

When we say a person is a "forceful speaker," we simply mean that he talks as though he were devoted to his cause. A good question to ask ourselves is, "Will I stick to my task in a crisis?" or "Am I optimistic about this cause in spite of discouragements?"

A GOOD LEADER IS UNSELFISH

A member of the President's National Agricultural Commission, who himself directs five hundred men in agricultural work, spoke about this question of rural leadership as follows: "It would be a catastrophe for the church to lose its influence in the countryside, for a man is of much less value to himself and to society if he is without religion. Even among scientists, with whom I work constantly, I am thoroughly convinced that there is no really successful life without the religious element in it. The religious element makes a man more willing to work in the many farm organizations. Men who are active in the church are also the most active in all big rural movements.

"The principal motive of religion is unselfishness, which is a necessary element in all rural leadership." The church is the training school for rural leaders

because it gives people this necessary element, unselfishness.

In a certain rural village a man died, recently, who was without heirs. His life had been without the influence of the church. When his will was read, the village was filled with consternation to learn that he had left his whole estate, $50,000, to build a marble mausoleum over his grave. In that same village, during the same year, a devout Christian woman, a widow, died, also without heirs. She left her entire estate, $4,400, in amounts of $200 each, to twenty-two different institutions or people, some of whom were girls working their way through high school. Thus rural communities everywhere include people who are dominated by selfish motives and others who live most unselfish lives, and it is from among the unselfish ones that local community leaders come.

One night not long ago I attended a meeting of farmers in a schoolhouse back in the hills. While there, my attention was attracted by a sign nailed on the outside of the school building, a sign on which was painted the name of a certain denomination. As I was unaccustomed to seeing the name of a church nailed to the side of a public school, I ventured to ask the history of the sign. I was told that some time ago because there had been no Sunday school in that neighborhood one had been started in this schoolhouse. Two families in the community thought the new Sunday school should bear the name of their denomination, while the rest thought it should not. In order to settle the quarrel, these two families had a large sign painted bearing the name of their sect, and nailed it to the

side of the public schoolhouse. The Sunday school soon died.

Much of our denominational competition is nothing more nor less than pure, unadulterated selfishness, dressed up in Sunday clothes. It is the unselfish attitude that makes of a man a leader in his community or in his profession. Mr. Stephen Babcock, who invented the "Babcock tester" for determining the amount of butter-fat in milk, had a colossal fortune within his grasp; but he gave to the dairy farmers of the world, without price, the Babcock tester, the product of his great genius.

Perhaps I can judge my own attitude by the way I answer the question as to whether or not I give up cheerfully to a better point of view than my own, if it comes from someone else. Am I willing to cooperate with others? Do I practise unselfish service, or do I just talk about it and recommend it to others?

A GOOD LEADER IS FRIENDLY

Black Creek Community is seven miles from the railroad, in a dairy farming section. It has a church, a school, a store, and a blacksmith shop. The local people here agreed, at a meeting which I attended, that their greatest need was "enthusiasm."

"Won't come out!" "Won't do nothin' much!" "Our men have to be dragged to a meetin'!" These were their own criticisms of each other.

These same farmers start their day's work at five in the morning and finish their morning chores, "the barn work," at about eleven. They start again at

four in the afternoon and finish at about eight; and this does not include their work in the fields. Such a schedule, seven days a week, is not uncommon among dairy farmers. Would this not take the "enthusiasm" out of anyone?

A leader in this community will need a lot of contagious enthusiasm. He could not drive these people. They are driven too much already. A leader here must be friendly, sympathetic, cheerful, approachable, interested in all the problems of the farmer. A meeting here, to be successful, must be a warm, friendly, cheerful gathering. One of the reasons that some rural-church leaders have as much trouble as they do in putting on a successful social program is that the social meetings are often held in the church basement which, during two thirds of the year, is usually dark, damp, and cold. Last winter I kept an account of the church basements in which I attended meetings in the country, and three fourths of them were damp and dark, with half-windows and cold cement floors. A good meeting must be cheerful and friendly. A good leader must bring cheer. He must talk success; he must act in a friendly way. People do not warm up to an iceberg. A good leader must have cheer, friendliness, and an endless amount of enthusiasm.

A COMMUNITY LEADER IS A SPECIALIST IN PEOPLE

We have seen that a good leader puts responsibility upon others. His appeal for leadership is not simply to get people to attend meetings or to join organizations; instead, he asks them to help out in a great cause.

To be a good leader, one must be sincere, must have faith in his cause, must be unselfish, and must be friendly and sympathetic with the people he is trying to lead. Many other qualities might also be mentioned, such as patience, fairness, and honesty of purpose. The good leader is business-like and prompt, as well as industrious and unafraid of work.

One purpose of this chapter is to show that these qualities of leadership are possible, that they can be acquired, and that rural communities everywhere are in sore need of people who possess them or who are willing to acquire them. Religion furnishes the motives, but patient training in the technique of leadership is needed. City churches can inaugurate all sorts of institutes for training leaders, which rural church representatives can attend.

A slender girl from North Carolina, with a Southern drawl and a sunny spirit, has come up to a cold, conservative county in New York State, and within a year and a half has started a dozen neighborhoods on the job of community improvement. She disclaims the title of "rural leader," but, nevertheless, since she came to this county, a dozen neighborhoods have taken a new lease of life and have started to remodel their public buildings and to rebuild their community organizations.

"I don't try to tell people what to do; I simply try to show them I'm interested in what they are doing," is the way she explains her part in these development projects. "I tell them what others are doing, and this seems to appeal to their community pride. But they make their own decisions and carry out their own plans."

This young woman's job, according to the County Board of Supervisors, is county home demonstration agent. She carries on projects in nutrition, clothing, millinery, and health, just as the thousand other home economics extension specialists do throughout the nation. But her work does not stop at the kitchen door of the farm homes in her county. She is a community doctor. She diagnoses the life of a whole neighborhood. She shows these unprogressive groups what they need and how to start a social reconstruction program.

Let us drive around the county and see some of the many good things country people are doing with the help and inspiration which such a leader furnishes. In Harrisville, for example, nutrition has not only reached the farm kitchens but has spread to the only public institution, the hot lunch has been introduced into the rural school. Each mother takes her turn at serving the lunch, and a few who are not mothers also help out. Of course such a project takes time, but less time, and money too, than taking Johnnie to the doctor.

A thoughtful person once remarked that if a neighborhood cemetery grows to weeds, there is little difference between the dead and the living. Glenfield showed its new life by improving its cemetery. To give permanency to the project the town organized a Cemetery Association, incorporated it, and thus expects to keep up this mark of pride for the living as well as the dead.

West Leyden has a serious problem, it is without a doctor. Although it has advertised for one, no applicant has risked his future to this inland population. Since the nearest doctor is ten miles away, the mothers

of this town have instituted a sort of emergency hospital. They have provided materials for quick use in case of need and have interested themselves in home nursing.

So the work of community improvement goes on, with "bake sales" and "teas," with home-talent plays and entertainments, to earn money for establishing a library in the school at Port Leyden, for carpeting the church and buying a piano for the grange at Greig, and for repairing the Constableville bandstand and improving its school.

The township of Harrisburgh would please the most radical ruralist, for there is not a sign of a city or even of a village within its bounds,—only beautiful farmsteads, occasional rural schools scattered here and there over its rolling landscape, and now and then a dilapidated old cheese factory. The deep snows of the long winters isolate these farm people from the outside world, and in the past there has been little "going on" within the community boundaries. At the center of the township, for no one knows how long, has stood an old and weather-worn town hall, which was formerly used just twice a year—on primary and election days. As the padlocked ballot boxes and the closed building evidenced, civic life in Harrisburgh has for some time lain dormant in contented inertia.

But last year that community housekeeper known as the home bureau agent challenged the pride of the women of Harrisburgh, and together they started a town-wide project—the fitting up of the old town hall as a community social and civic building. A new roof has been put on, and a piano bought. The women are

painting the interior; and the men are adding a kitchen to the equipment as an expression of their interest in the proposition.

Such real rural leadership as this young Southern girl, only a couple of years out of Columbia University, shows, is rarely to be found. She always suggests *success,* and she disclaims any credit for the many achievements, saying, "The people are doing it all themselves; I'm just watching them. I never give them any advice; I just tell them what others are doing." She has a happy, easy-going way of not getting her feelings hurt; regardless of criticism, she smiles and keeps working. Then, too, she has no interest in community conflicts or gossip. She simply says, "Oh, yes, they have their little spats, but they'll get over them all right." And she goes ahead appealing to the good in people instead of to the evil.

Another of her good-leadership qualities this young woman attributes to her mother, who gave her the sort of religious experience that has made her eager and happy to work with and for other people.

Rural America is in great need of young women and young men with trained minds and consecrated lives, who will come forward and take their places of leadership as this young country girl from the Piedmont Plain has done.

A GOOD LEADER MUST KNOW HIS SUBJECT

To a county extension school for training recreational leaders, one day, came representatives from churches, granges, schools, and home bureaus—forty

people altogether. Among them was a shy woman from a farm in a remote corner of the county. She drove her own car and brought her three-year-old son with her. She had done her housework before she left home, had milked five cows and done the chores, had prepared her three children for school, and had arrived at the training school in the county seat by ten o'clock.

But she had never led any games in her life; and, besides, she was too diffident to take part. A psychologist would have said that she had an "inferiority complex." She seemed so embarrassed when asked to do anything that we allowed her simply to sit near by and watch the demonstrations.

She undoubtedly learned more during the day than we had thought, however, for soon afterward her home grange asked her to take charge of a community meeting. "That meeting," the grange members agreed, "was the best meeting of all the year." Before the month had passed a church social also fell to her lot to conduct, and it too was a success.

A month later she returned to the second school session in this series, and this time she came with confidence instead of diffidence and fear. She had learned how to do something. She knew how to conduct a community social gathering. Her two meetings had been successful, and her neighbors had complimented her. When the discussion at this second training school started, she took part. At the other meetings in the series she continued to learn; and now she is looked upon as a leader in her community. Public school teachers come to her for help. The home bureau in which she was at first simply "a member" now re-

gards her as one of its best "leaders." This change has taken place because she learned to do something which no one else in her neighborhood knew how to do. To be a leader, one must either know how to do one thing, or be willing to learn.

During the past year I have had 1,033 people like this woman attending training schools in recreational leadership. They have come from almost as many different communities. The only thing that many of them apparently brought to the first school was a desire to learn. Each one learned a little at the first lesson, went home and tried to lead, came back a month later and for another five hours learned a little more, and then returned a month later and patiently continued to put forth effort. After having conducted these leadership training schools almost continuously for three years, I am convinced that when a person says, "I just can't lead," he means by this, "I am not willing to put forth the effort to learn." Likewise, when a church says, "We have no leaders," it really admits, "We have done nothing to train any leaders."

We used to write upon the blackboard in the country school the sentence, "Knowledge is power." This sentence is as true now as ever. In every group, he who knows will, sooner or later, be asked by the crowd to come forward and lead. Any church, instead of lamenting over the fact that it has no leaders, has just one course to pursue, to train its leaders. This applies to all types of community leadership.

The county fairs in New York, as in most other places, offered in addition to their agricultural exhibits, many entertainment features of questionable

value. Cheap amusement companies hired concessions at the fairgrounds, paying so much a foot along the "midway," and left behind a trail of undesirable influences on the youth of each county. A few years ago a woman, the mother of five children, who had originally come from Holland and who was at the time living on a New York State farm, suggested that in each county people be trained to put on home-talent plays for entertainment features at these fairs. The State College of Agriculture acted upon her suggestion, and last winter the department in which I am working, trained leaders in dramatization and pageantry from 276 different rural communities. Instead of appointing committees to "investigate and report," and instead of condemning the "rotten influences of commercialized amusements" at these and other fairs, it seems a more constructive procedure to train leaders to furnish something better, more interesting, and more wholesome.

METHODS FOR TRAINING CHURCH LEADERS

Leadership in the church, as in other institutions, is a result of training. Too long we have simply prayed the Lord to send us leaders. Let us rather ask Him to send us a desire to learn how to lead. We have in the past falsely said that "opportunity knocks but once at every door." It does not knock at all. It comes constantly, however, to seek people who are ready, who have ability, who have learned how, who are sympathetic towards others, and who see visions and dream dreams of things to be done.

The training of local leaders is now the great task for each church and for each denomination. During the last eight years we have put large sums of money into brick and mortar; church edifices costing huge sums have been built. Is it too much to hope that the same enthusiasm and equal sums will be put into leadership training during the next eight years? When we are told by a board secretary that his denomination has lost one and one eighth million probationers during the last four years because no provision has been made for training them, we are brought face to face with the importance of this subject. The theme of this chapter is that leaders are not "born," neither are they "discovered"; they are "trained." It is to this program for leadership training in the churches that we must dedicate ourselves.

On a recent Sunday, in a large church, I watched ten men go forward to take charge of the offering. They were all aged; some limped; each had white hair. It was a pathetic sight. It was as if a group of boys had reached the third grade in school, and, because they had proved efficient in arithmetic or reading, had been kept there all their lives. No others had been promoted into that grade because this class had done so well. Why not train the young men to take up the offering?

Fortunately, many churches are looking upon this task of training leaders as their greatest opportunity. A church in Washington, D. C., has a summer camp, the purpose of which is to train leaders. The director of religious education of that church has a thousand people during the summer in that camp for training.

"After a summer's experience in the camp with these people," the religious education director said, "I can ask any one of them to teach a Sunday-school class and he will do it."

A daily vacation school in Memphis, Tennessee, has forty-five volunteer teachers. "During these four weeks," says the religious education director, "these leaders get their training for the work they are to do in church during the coming year." And then this man, who is giving all his time to the training of church leaders, adds, "We can't train leaders by preaching to them. We must assign them tasks and then supervise them as they work."

When a certain pastor went to preside over a village parish in New Jersey, he was amazed to find that his new church, with its four hundred members, had not trained a single minister or missionary or other religious leader in the past fifty years. He began to send his young people, in large numbers, to Christian Endeavor summer institutes. Now these young people are coming forward and enlisting in professional Christian callings. Many a young person in our churches, like Lazarus, is bound hand and foot in grave clothes, waiting for you to loose him and send him forth.

Every church needs a workers' library for technical information on missions, stewardship, evangelism, recreation, and religious education. A church is a school of religion, and we can hardly picture a school without books.

Many churches are training their local leaders by means of "church nights." Study classes in missions, in religious education, or in stewardship are conducted

for the training of church workers. Missionary pageants and Bible dramatizations are parts of such a program.

A young pastor went to a rural community in Texas, thirteen miles from the railroad. His church had, in the past, emphasized only an emotional evangelism, and as a result of the annual summer revival had built up a congregation of a hundred members. The new pastor relied almost entirely on his weekly church night to train a complete corps of workers for this church. Another pastor used his Sunday evening services once a month for Bible dramatizations. Forty-six young people met regularly once a week to study the great characters of the Bible for this purpose. Another minister who was intensely interested that his church pledge its full quota to missions, met his congregation for five successive nights to talk over with them the importance of the various items in the year's budget.

A rural church in Ohio, with 145 members, believed so strongly in the value of training their members that 142 of the 145 members attended a certain association institute.

In the little village of Eolia, Missouri, which has a population of four hundred people, there lives a merchant who sells farm implements and furniture, but whose principal business is superintending his Sunday school. For the past ten years he has had his teachers and officers meet together once a month at some home in the community. The average attendance of twenty at this meeting is maintained because this layman always has plenty of business planned for each meeting. Although the population of the village is only

400, he had 306 present at a recent service and 343 the following Sunday. He is training new leaders instead of lamenting over the fact that his leaders move to the city.

In training leaders, it is important to make it easy for people to begin. Physical activities are the first to be undertaken. These include such things as ushering, the leading of plays and games, the serving of suppers, and the packing of missionary boxes. It is important that such activities as these always be kept for beginners in church work.

The next step in the training process is group mental activities, such as singing in a chorus, enrolment in a mission study class or teacher-training class, the conducting of socials or the taking part in special-day programs. The making of the every-member canvass would come in this list of group mental activities. At this time it is important that there be many outside contacts with other churches and with other workers, to observe church methods.

The third stage in this training is the individual mental activities, which include the conducting of worship programs in the Sunday school or young people's organization, the teaching of mission-study classes or Sunday-school classes, leading in prayer, taking part in discussion groups, and doing all kinds of personal work in the community. In all this training there should be supervision by the pastor or by some other trained worker.

The principal task in the training of leaders, in addition to giving them the technique of leadership, is the stimulating of purposes. In farm and home bureau

work, a common method for stimulating purposes is to make tours to fields or homes in order to observe the successful practises of others. In one county a new school playground was included in one of these county tours. Within a year five other communities in the county started to build similar playgrounds. Since the automobile is now such a common possession, a rural congregation can make similar tours to successful churches and study their programs and equipment.

Another way of stimulating purposes in leaders is to conduct discussion meetings. The College of Agriculture of the state of West Virginia has held these discussion meetings in some two hundred rural communities, and has discussed all phases of community improvement—health, education, farming, home-making, and religion. The best kind of discussion meeting is one in which the group takes an inventory of its own needs and problems, as well as of its goals and ideals.

One of the best ways to stimulate the purposes of leaders who are being trained is to visualize for them the task to be done. For this, community maps, denominational maps, and world maps are very helpful. One young people's society made a map of its parish, indicating the residence of each family by a hollow circle. If the family was connected with their church, they filled in the circle with red crayon; if the family belonged to another church, they used blue crayon. The unfilled and uncolored circles indicated the task of evangelism for this young people's group.

It is important to get young people in touch with other leaders. This may be done by sending them away to summer institutes, and by bringing all types of

leaders to the church, not only to speak but also to have personal and group conferences.

The greatest progress in the training of agricultural leaders recently has been made through demonstrations and experiments. Boys' club members were taught how to raise one acre of corn according to scientific methods, and thousands of farmers learned from these experiments. A representative of the firm which manufactures more pipe organs than any other company in America, and who has, himself, been selling organs for thirty years, says ninety per cent of the pipe organs which have been bought by churches were purchased because the congregation had seen similar organs in near-by churches. For a leader or a group to undertake some improvement or change of practises as an experiment, or to demonstrate what can be done, has been found to be a most successful method of inspiring leadership.

During the past year I have spent considerable time studying a very successful rural church. During the recent hard times, this church out in the open country has built a new $50,000 addition to the old one-room auditorium, for social and educational activities. It conducts a daily vacation Bible school with an enrolment of ninety-four pupils, bringing them to the church in busses from a radius of seven miles. The average attendance for the year at the "community night" program, held each Friday, has been 325. A men's Bible class of fifty members, a young men's class of twenty-five members, a class of twenty-three high-school boys and girls, are indications of the success of this church. After studying the program of this church carefully,

I am convinced that its success is due to its interest in training its leaders.

"You can do just as much as you have developed leadership for, and you can't do any more," said the pastor, in discussing his "Workers' Conferences."

"Most ministers complain that their leaders leave to go to the city. I see no way of changing this 'city drift.' But my job is to train new leaders from those who stay in the community. We hold one of these workers' conferences each month.

"I should like to organize the Boy Scouts. We have the boys, but I don't see anyone just yet who could take charge of them. So I am not going to start them until I have some leaders ready. My job is to start things and to train leaders.

"Last year I took charge of Decision Day in the church school. We had twenty-four decisions. This year I'm training the teachers to do this."

Before the monthly Workers' Conferences, the pastor sends to each worker a list of questions which are to be discussed at the meeting. The workers are asked to come prepared to discuss the questions and to help work out a unified program.

FULL-TIME OR PROFESSIONAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Having discussed some of the qualities of leadership for individuals and some of the successful methods which the church is using in training its local leaders, we shall now consider briefly the question of full-time or professional religious leadership.

As a local leader must be trained for his special

task in the church, so likewise professional religious leaders need special training. Doctors, teachers, and lawyers specialize according to the subjects which they are to teach or to the people to whom they are to minister. Specialized training for rural ministers is one of the new and hopeful signs in our national church policies. During the last ten years, over thirty educational institutions have employed specialists to train rural ministers for their specific task. These rural leadership specialists are usually men who have been successful rural pastors. They not only teach modern rural church methods, but spend about half of their time in the parishes in which their students are working, helping them to define their tasks and to outline their programs.

Colleges and universities, in order to train rural-life leaders, are adding chairs of rural sociology to their faculties. A recent bulletin of the United States Department of Agriculture lists 500 of these teachers.

The increasing demand for young women to become rural directors of religious education and community workers, is calling for new courses and new departments in our educational institutions. The enrolment in one of these schools of religious education has doubled each year for three successive years.

It is most important that the people who are now in rural church work should keep up to date. The larger denominations, and some of the smaller ones too, recently have selected board secretaries who are giving all their time to rural work. These rural secretaries are doing much to dignify the rural pastorate, to glorify country life, and to honor the country church.

They sometimes stand alone in the higher councils of their denomination as they plead for the rural church and call the attention of their entire denomination to the importance of rural work. To them is due the credit for bringing about a new devotion and love in the hearts of all of us for the church of the open fields.

Summer schools for training rural church leaders have been one of the outstanding projects of these rural church secretaries. The Presbyterian Department of Church and Country Life in 1912 initiated the plan of providing graduate training for rural pastors at summer schools. The Methodist Episcopal Church adopted the plan five years later and has since given special training to 5,000 rural ministers. There were only six out of 500 districts in the Methodist Church that were not represented in these schools one summer. The Baptist, the Episcopal, the Christian, the Reformed, the Congregational, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and others have engaged in this recent program of training rural leaders.

It is to be hoped that the next forward step in all our denominations will be an increased emphasis upon the training of rural leaders.

It is not too much to ask of religious leaders who are to work with rural folk that they live with the people whom they are to serve. They must recognize the genuine qualities of the countryside—sincerity, honesty, fellowship, and friendliness. They must love country folk for their real worth.

Shall we not dedicate our lives to the church of the open fields?

If you would be a professional or full-time religious

rural church worker, you will prefer the close, personal, human relationships of the countryside to the city streets with their throngs of strangers. As Jesus found His most fruitful field for service among the common people, they who heard him gladly, and from whom he selected his leaders, in whose humble homes he sought retreat; so may you and I realize the opportunities of giving our lives in gladsome service to the poor proud homes of the countryside of rural America, where idealism is valued more highly than wealth, where leaders are reared, where home life is most sacred, where men stand stalwart and firm for the reform movements of the nation, where women choose the "better part" at their own firesides—humble rural homes, but the kind which the Son of God selected for His birth, and the kind in which He seeks to be born anew.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Leaders in rural churches are moving to the cities. Others are getting too old to lead. The training of new leaders is one of the church's most important tasks.

A good leader puts responsibility upon others and gives them credit for what they do; makes his people aware that it is they who are helping to bring about improved conditions; is sincere; has faith in himself and in his cause; is unselfish; talks success instead of failure; is friendly to all classes; and knows his subject or is willing to put forth effort to learn it.

Churches are finding the following among the best

ways to train leaders: summer institutes; a workers' library; church nights; dramatizations and pageantry; monthly workers' councils; visits to successful churches; discussion meetings; visualized instruction; demonstrations and experiments.

Denominations are providing specialized training for rural church workers through their new departments of Church and Country Life.

For those who prefer the work of intensive character building and the close personal relationships of rural life, there is to be found among the rural churches a big field for life work.

LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH AS IN OTHER INSTITUTIONS IS A RESULT OF TRAINING. THE PASTOR OF THIS CHURCH IN THE OPEN COUNTRY HAS A "WORKERS' CONFERENCE" ONCE A MONTH. BEFORE EACH CONFERENCE HE SENDS EACH OFFICER A LIST OF SUBJECTS RELATING TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CHURCH WHICH ARE TO BE DISCUSSED. A SUPPER PRECEDES THE DISCUSSION PERIOD.

THIS CHURCH HAD A DAILY VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL OF NINETY-EIGHT PUPILS, WHO WERE BROUGHT TO IT IN THIS BUS, FROM A RADIUS OF SEVEN MILES. THERE IS ALSO A MEN'S BIBLE CLASS OF FIFTY MEMBERS, A YOUNG MEN'S CLASS OF TWENTY-FIVE MEMBERS, AND A CLASS OF TWENTY-THREE HIGH SCHOOL PUPILS. THE PASTOR NEVER STARTS AN ORGANIZATION UNTIL HE HAS TRAINED THE NECESSARY LEADERS

THIS LEADER OF A JUNIOR MISSIONARY SOCIETY (ABOVE) IS MAKING USE OF STORYTELLING AS A METHOD OF TEACHING. BELOW IS PICTURED ONE OF THE MOST ENCOURAGING PHASES OF RURAL CHURCH WORK, THE TRAINING OF RURAL MINISTERS. ONE DENOMINATION IN FIVE YEARS HAS PAID THE EXPENSES OF FOUR THOUSAND RURAL MINISTERS TO ATTEND SUMMER TRAINING SCHOOLS.

FOR A CENTURY CHURCHES HAVE DIVIDED NEIGHBORHOODS. FOR ONLY THE PAST DECADE HAVE THEY TRIED TO UNITE COMMUNITIES. THE FOUR CHURCHES ARE IN A VILLAGE WHICH HAS BUT ONE DRUG STORE, ONE BANK, ONE SCHOOL, ONE BUSINESS BLOCK, AND ONE RELIGIOUS NEED.

V

THE RURAL CHURCH AND THE NATION

For a long time we have heard of the great contribution the rural church has made to the nation, the leaders it has furnished, the ideals it has conserved, the national reforms it has made possible, and the simple religious faith it has cultivated. This chapter will deal with the other side of this question: what the nation, in turn, should do for the rural church.

The rural church is more than a home-mission problem; it is from two thirds to three fourths of the whole church problem. Seventy-five per cent of our American churches are rural. What are we as a nation going to do for them?

There are those who are asking special recognition for the country. All that the farmer himself asks, however, is fair treatment—in freight rates, in taxes, in tariff, in schools, and in churches. He is not asking for "special" treatment.

It is a most common tendency to "soothe injustice with charity." Representatives from city chambers of commerce throughout eight states in the Southwest recently met in Kansas City and discussed for two days "ways and means whereby they could help the farmers." They reported that they had set up agricultural bureaus in their chambers of commerce, had appointed agricultural committees, had held luncheon conferences, and had written many letters. At length someone asked, "How many of you have put on an active campaign to bring farmer members into your

organizations?" Of the forty representatives present, only one replied in the affirmative. The secretary from the chamber of commerce of one city said, "I could raise $1,000 among business men for a parade, but I would have a great deal of trouble in raising that amount for a livestock-improvement campaign." What is needed is that the cities shall help to create a farm dollar, instead of merely dividing the farmer's dollar with him.

This same sort of fair treatment is needed by country schools and churches. New York City receives $700 from the state for each of its teachers; the teacher of a one-room district school in New York State receives only $350 from the state funds, the greatest aid thus being given where the teaching conditions are easiest.

The same inequality is even more noticeable in the training of rural teachers. In Pennsylvania, for example, forty-four per cent of the teachers are located in rural schools. One would expect the normal schools to give forty-four per cent of their graduates specific training for rural school teaching, but, on the contrary, only five per cent of the graduates receive such special training. Annually, in Pennsylvania, the sum of half a million dollars of teacher-training funds belonging to rural education is used to train urban teachers.[1]

We should not need to look far into this question to find that ministers likewise are trained for city churches and not for rural work. Many denominations

[1] Article by Charles E. Myers in *The Journal of Rural Education*, New York, November, 1924.

are facing this situation squarely in recent years, however, and are planning their entire denominational program so as to give fair treatment to their rural churches. This national program for rural churches is the theme for our discussion in this chapter.

A NATIONAL RURAL CHURCH POLICY

Why do we need a national rural church policy? Because many of the problems of the rural church cannot be solved on a community basis but demand a national policy for the entire denomination.

A country or village church may want a director of religious education, but it cannot afford the salary of an additional worker. In this field, however, a trained worker could guide the educational policies of several near-by churches instead of only one. Therefore, a unit of supervision larger than a local church is practical. There must be a denominational policy, in this case, a policy to furnish expert religious-educational supervision for all rural churches.

The rural secretaries of each denomination have lately been working out, with infinite care, efficient programs for their rural churches. But practically none of the rural churches as they exist today are financially able to carry on unaided such splendid programs. Whether or not there is money enough in the rural districts and whether or not the people can afford to give, cannot be taken up here; the fact remains, the individual church has little money to spend. In order, then, to put on these modern programs and thereby win the support of a larger constituency and more financial

help from the parishioners, rural churches must receive financial aid from the outside. Some denominations have been calling these churches which they have thus helped, "demonstration churches." A "demonstration church" is one which has been selected to demonstrate the results of a modern rural program. In order to give a church this opportunity, it is given ample financial aid for a limited time.[2]

A church is not only a group of Christians who believe alike, but also an organization that must propagate itself. The "similar beliefs" we call our creeds. Since the denominational officials conserve these beliefs and teach them, we speak of them as "our denominational beliefs" or "convictions." When we analyze what we call our denominational convictions, most of us find that we have acquired them through the teaching and general influence of the families and churches into which we were born. Liberty of conscience in all these matters has been one of the cornerstones of Protestantism. In a parish with a growing population, such as, for example, a city parish, there seems to be little disagreement between these two functions of a church—the conserving of its beliefs and the propagating of itself. But in the rural sections, with a decreasing population, these two functions are not so easily harmonized. Our denominational convictions separate us into such small groups, that, as a result, we

[2] This should not be confused with the method sometimes practised of giving financial help to churches that are not putting on an efficient program but which are being aided primarily for the purpose of keeping the denomination alive in that community, even though churches of other denominations could care for the field.

often have an organization that is too small to carry on. With due recognition of the essential values in our denominational heritage, we must realize that if the churches in rural America are to occupy their great fields of opportunity, some arrangements must be made whereby our rural church organization shall be larger. This will mean, first, that rural church organizations of the same faith that are located comparatively near one another must be united. In the second place, it will mean that the denominations must teach that we can work together in one organization or church, even though many of us may hold different personal beliefs.

We also need a national rural church policy of evangelism. It is assumed that as far as the methods of evangelism are concerned we will follow our own denominational teachings. But there needs to be a national or cooperative policy worked out whereby we can serve the entire rural field and not leave great areas untouched, as we are now doing. The help of our national church statesmen is needed in this task of carrying the gospel into the rural homes that, up to the present time, have been left untouched in such large numbers.

These rural church questions and policies are not little problems that can be settled by a local church group, for they concern us all and are of vital importance to our entire denominations and to the nation as a whole if the rural church is to occupy the place of importance demanded of it.

The church is primarily a spiritual institution and its first task is to evangelize or to bring spiritual re-

sources to the lives of men. We shall therefore consider first the need for a national policy which will assist in this phase of rural church work.

A NATIONAL CHURCH POLICY OF RURAL EVANGELISM

In a certain valley, at intervals of about three miles, are small hamlets, each with one church. Parallel with this valley lies another valley and another row of hamlets and churches. Between these valleys is a row of hills in which no church is to be found. Not long ago I held an agricultural meeting in a part of this hill country, and of the sixty-eight people present, only two were members of any church. One of these two was fifty-five years old, the other seventy; both were women. No church claimed these homes as a part of its parish.

Let us inquire into why the churches in the valley do not reach out into this "no man's land." They could easily organize with volunteer workers an extension program which would include the hill population if they were strong churches and had missionary enthusiasm. But they are all weak and without resident ministers. If the four churches were all of one denomination, it would be easy to get missionary aid from the outside. But on one side of the hill A is a Baptist, B is an Episcopal, C is a Congregational, and D is a Reformed church. The churches in the valley across the hills are just as diverse: E is a Methodist, F is a Presbyterian, and G is a Catholic church. Between these two valleys this "no man's land" is unchurched, unclaimed, uncared for.

Miss Mabel Dowse, a rural-school teacher whose work in one of these isolated sections brought her into daily contact with the homes, became impressed with the paucity of religious instruction of any kind. She therefore dedicated her life to the service of the people of just such a "no man's land." She gave up her school, went to the Boston School of Religious Education for specialized training, and then went back into the hill country to work in these neglected homes. She attached herself to a local church, though her work was in the outlying sections. She asked her national board of missions to help support her, although she tried to connect these hill country people with their nearest church, regardless of its denomination. Her field of work covered three townships.

"I travel by trains, hired teams, milk wagons, chance rides in autos, and often by walking," she said, in telling of her vast territory with its scattered homes.

Instead of staying in the village and inviting the people to come to her, a plan which is too often followed by religious workers, she has a regular itinerary of visiting in the homes and organizing home study clubs. Where three or four families live at cross-roads, she organizes a study group. Another group is gathered together in a hamlet or among a chain of houses in some clearing, and to those centers she comes regularly on her friendly visits and brings her literature.

"In imagination," she said, "I have seen these little groups scattered throughout all our rural sections of America. I find that the children like this group work, and look forward to the coming of the Sunday-

school literature and the 'Sunday-school woman,' as they call me.

"The children carry much more instruction home with them than I could possibly carry to this vast field. I have often had children say, 'Every night when we get home from group meeting, we tell our folks what you have said.' I have found that things I have taught the children have been talked over at the family table, and by this means parents also are reached."

Miss Dowse thinks that to this family service a woman is better suited than a man, because such work is largely connected with the mothers and children. She recommends, in addition to college or normal school training, at least two years of special study in a school of religious education. She thinks that young women who have had experience as public school teachers have a great advantage in this type of work, and she recommends it as a splendid opportunity for missionary service.

"I wish this family plan might be carried out in many isolated sections," she says, "and that workers with vision and consecration might be available to carry it forward to all the children and young people of 'no man's land'! In some sections it may not be a great success, but in general it will be. The idea is new to our churches. But they know that such a work needs to be done. I think churches as a rule will never be able to carry on this work without help from the outside. Others will get the work started with outside help, and then it will possibly be self-supporting. In most cases our country churches are too poor

to pay a special worker, but the national boards of home missions or state associations will help, and thus a great and needy work can be accomplished."

The women's boards of home missions have long been interested in this type of work. There are literally thousands of homes in America, in the mountains of the South, along the Mexican border, and in the mining districts of the East, into which the only religious message that enters comes because of the consecrated work of our women's home missionary societies. A certain young woman working in a needy field in Mississippi under a Women's National Missionary agency reports that she visited 1,366 homes in one year, and in addition attended 200 meetings. But when one finds that four people out of every five in rural America are still members of no church, the magnitude and the importance of this task grow larger. It is of national importance and calls for consideration from the church as a whole.

We wish to suggest here a concrete method of attacking this problem by giving the account of a statesmanlike plan that was worked out in New Hampshire.[3]

"A committee of the New Hampshire Interdenominational Commission, representing the leading Protestant denominations in the state, was appointed to make a survey of the state for the purpose of discovering where the unchurched people were.

"The Commission undertook, first, to acquaint the churches of the state with this situation and to arouse some new sense of responsibility for the outlying dis-

[3] We are indebted to Rev. E. R. Stearns, Secretary of the New Hampshire Congregational Conference for this information.

tricts, with the distinct aim of thrusting out the frontiers of every parish until it should reach the neighboring parish for the purpose of eliminating 'no man's land.'

"Second, since the churches of the state were organized denominationally into state bodies and there was no interdenominational body with executive authority or funds, it was decided to lay definite responsibility for the whole state upon the denominational bodies. So the portion north of the Grand Trunk Railroad was assigned to the Episcopalians, at their own request; the eastern portion of the state to the Baptists; the west-central portions in the Connecticut Valley to the Methodists; the southwestern section, including Cheshire County, and the adjacent parts of Sullivan and Hillsborough Counties, to the Congregationalists. Since the old center of interest of the Presbyterians was Londonderry and the majority of their churches were in that section, it was suggested that they be asked to take that region.

"The vote was that each denomination be asked to look after particularly the neglected portions of its territory through the commissioning of special workers or the increase of responsibility of general workers already in the field; that as these territories and families were discovered, they should be related to the nearest available church, without regard to denomination; that these workers, while paid by and immediately responsible to their denominational boards, should also report to the Interdenominational Commission and to the denominational offices immediately interested in the kind of work that they were doing."

When the church leaders of every state assign the unevangelized territory to certain denominations and make them responsible for reaching every unchurched home in that territory, we shall have begun a most hopeful national policy of evangelism.

In the meantime, we can inaugurate this plan in our own communities by dividing the families among the local churches. The Kingdom of Heaven was described again and again by Jesus in his parables as just such a search for the lost. We pray daily, "Thy Kingdom come." Herein lies our portion of the responsibility.

A NATIONAL RURAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY

The most important part of this national program of evangelism is the work with the youth.

Someone has said that we need more religion in our education and more education in our religion. In order to take advantage of the most modern and most efficient educational methods in our religious teaching, we need, of course, the help of highly trained specialists in this field, trained directors of religious education. One rural church alone cannot employ these specialists. Therefore we must have a national church policy of employment of religious education directors, under the supervision of either some interdenominational committee or national or district denominational agencies.[4]

[4] These rural directors of religious education do not work with all the churches in a district or diocese in a supervisory way, but rather they select a group of rural churches where they themselves demonstrate the best methods of work.

Three years ago a church in northern Illinois had, as its total membership, three elderly women, all past seventy years of age. One recent Sunday morning thirty-five people joined that church, and ten more joined a few Sundays later. This change has been the result of a revival, an educational revival, that has extended over a period of three years and has been conducted by a director of religious education.

Three years ago there were no preaching services in this church, and its tiny Sunday school had only three teachers, and no adult members. The nearest church in any direction was three miles away, and most of the children within its area had never attended any church services in their lives.

At the present time every boy and girl in this parish attends the church school. For three summers a daily vacation church school has been conducted here. The workers' conferences, which began with three people, and now number many more, have met regularly each month. A mothers' and daughters' banquet, a winter picnic, and regular mothers' meetings have all been included in the program. This is one of thirty communities in which this one director of religious education is working!

Would you think you had a big job if you found yourself in charge of the religious education of a whole county in which there were 18,000 children of school age, 7,000 of whom were receiving no religious instruction whatsoever? This was the task awaiting Miss Edna Baxter when she finished her graduate study and went to Lake County, in the northeastern part of Illinois. Here her work as an organizer was so suc-

cessful that McHenry County and a part of Cook County were soon added to her field.

But while one of the many modern church movements in all denominations is this new emphasis on religious education,—and the day now seems near when every city church will have a well-paid, highly-trained person to direct the religious education of its youth,—many rural churches cannot afford to pay this additional worker. The national secretaries, though aware of the need for such work, until recently despaired of being able to employ a "rural director of religious education." Five years ago, however, Professor C. J. Hewitt, who is in charge of rural church extension at Garrett Biblical Institute, arranged for Miss Baxter to take charge of a whole group of country churches. Since then, in his denomination, seven of these rural district directors have been employed. But the movement is only beginning. After studying the work of this one rural specialist and keeping in mind that there are two million more children in the country than in the city, let us see what opportunities for life service this field offers to young college women.

The district in which Miss Baxter is working is within fifty miles of Chicago, a dairy section dotted with lakes and summer-tourist camps, a region in which religious life five years ago was at a low ebb. The churches were for the most part "points" on circuits, many with absentee pastors. The annual ladies' aid supper or strawberry festival helped pay the pastor's salary and provided a small amount of social life for the young. The Sunday schools were run by devout

but untrained laymen. The lesson on Sunday was taught by asking the class to "read around," and if any time was left, the questions in the quarterly were read aloud. As an indication of the need for religious education, it should be noted that in one of the Sunday schools, a girl of high school rank hunted through her Bible to find the story of Abraham Lincoln. With the amount of time which had been given to religious education in these town and county churches, it would take fourteen years to teach the boys and girls as much about the Bible or religion as they learned in one year about mathematics in the public schools; yet probably no one would consider the learning of mathematics to be fourteen times as important as character development through religious instruction.

One of the ways for giving more time in a child's life to religious instruction is by the daily vacation Bible school. These schools are held for three hours each day for a period of three weeks during the summer. Miss Baxter feels that with the trained leadership she uses in these schools, she can accomplish as much in the lives of the pupils in the three weeks as in the regular Sunday school period during a whole year. During her first year here, a total of three daily vacation Bible schools were held in the entire district. Two college students volunteered to help with the teaching. The next year the number increased to thirteen schools, with twenty-seven college girls and seven public school teachers giving their time without charge. Last year nineteen schools were held, with forty-six teachers and twenty-six assistants, and an enrolment of 628 pupils—and all at a total cost of only $237.41!

The total results of this type of work are not at first apparent. But churches, which had not cooperated on anything before, united on this project. When the people of the community saw the college girls and the public school teachers giving their time free, they realized as never before the importance of religious education. The Sunday school teachers who for years had faithfully done their best, but who were without training, had a chance to see demonstrated in these schools a better method of teaching. The children were taught to worship, that is, to conduct a worship program. Graded lesson material was, of course, introduced. The participation of the pupils in the lesson discussion was one of the most interesting features of the work to some of the Sunday school teachers who had hitherto felt it necessary to do all the talking themselves while teaching a lesson. "Expressional activities" connected with each day's teaching, were eagerly carried on by the pupils. Chief among these were the making of presents and packing boxes for children of other races and of other lands.

These vacation schools were held during only two months of the year. The main part of the director's time was given to training the resident leadership in the churches. The various methods that were used for helping these local leaders comprise a long list, such as two-day institutes, weekly teacher-training classes, monthly workers' conferences, correspondence courses, traveling libraries, and church nights with everybody in attendance.

One of the unique features of the work has been the organization of mothers' associations, the purpose of

which has been to help the mothers in their task of teaching religion in the home. Seven successful mothers' associations have been developed in the district, with an entirely new approach to this subject of religious education. Summer camps for girls have been organized for the purpose of training leaders for the local churches. Seventy-five girls received this intensive training last summer. Week-day classes in religion have been carried on in seven of the communities.

One who has only a casual interest in this subject can scarcely realize how much a trained person can accomplish in the religious education of three counties in two or three years. The churches, however, are at last beginning to recognize that to supplement home care a trained religious educator is just as necessary for a child's character development as a trained physician is for the care of his body.

In one of the Sunday schools in this Illinois district, for example, there were six children in the beginners' department. The faithful teacher had done everything that she could to increase this number. She had offered prizes, had held contests, and had coaxed. The numbers would occasionally increase, only to sink back, soon, to the old level. The trained director of religious education was able to help this teacher in the use of stories; she gave her material for special-day programs, and showed her how to use hand-work. The attendance in this department then gradually increased from six to twenty-one members. A similar improvement in each department of thirty Sunday schools is the result that may be produced by a district director of religious education for town and country churches.

Miss Marie Marvel, who is one of the seven rural district directors of religious education in this same denomination, feels that some of her most valuable work is the training which she is able to give to the students in the University of Illinois. Miss Marvel's district is in the heart of the Corn Belt, in the central part of the state, and her headquarters are at Champaign-Urbana, the seat of the State University. Students from the University are thus constantly being familiarized with the opportunities for religious service in rural work. For example, the Country Life Club of the University conducted entertainments in the rural churches; the Agricultural Glee Club of the University assisted in the Sunday school institute programs; the Young Men's Christian Association sent gospel teams to work in eight of Miss Marvel's sixteen churches; the University Young Women's Christian Association sent deputation committees to assist with the mothers' and daughters' banquets, girls' hikes, and conferences. Thus in one month alone, twenty-eight different students of the University of Illinois were at work in these rural churches. Fifty-one students during the year 1924-25 rendered volunteer service and at the same time caught a glimpse in this way of the unlimited possibilities that challenge one for full-time religious work in rural communities.

Is not this a desirable way to interest our college and university students in rural work? Why should we not have rural directors of religious education establish headquarters at all our university centers? This is a national rural church policy which, no doubt, will be adopted by some of the denominational boards.

A NATIONAL POLICY FOR RURAL CHURCH WOMEN

Much can be said about the loyalty of the women's organizations of our churches to their national denominational programs. While our great benevolent boards have been constantly handicapped during the last six years for lack of funds, the income from the women's organizations has increased each year during this time of financial depression. However, the rural women of our denominations have had too small a part in this great missionary enterprise. May we suggest as a goal or project for the coming year the reaching of the rural women with our missionary program? Leaders can no doubt cite many instances of strong women's organizations in our rural churches, but the recent surveys show that this is exceptional. The Institute of Social and Religious Research shows, as a result of its studies, that forty-seven per cent of all town and country churches do not have a woman's society of any kind. Let us consider three proposals: first, that women's societies of town or city churches put on an extension program to reach the rural women; second, that women's societies in the open country be organized, according to circuits, instead of in individual churches; and third, that the women's organizations of individual rural churches be consolidated.

We shall now consider the first of these, an extension program for city or town churches, in order to reach the rural women.

In Fayette, Missouri, a town which classes itself as a city, there is on the edge of the college campus a South-

ern Methodist church. A golf course separates the church from the farms adjoining the city limits, and time-worn prejudices have separated the country people from the city-church members. From time to time the women in the missionary society noticed that not one farm woman belonged to their organizations. "We've invited the country women again and again, and they just will not come," was the only explanation the members could give.

The president of the society was not satisfied, however, with such an explanation. She, or some other member of the society, saw personally, or telephoned, every rural woman who was a member of that church. They learned that the country women could not attend the afternoon meetings because of the lateness of the hour. The meeting interfered with the evening chores on the farm. Consequently, the two afternoon meetings each month were consolidated into one monthly meeting in the middle of the day, so as to accommodate the women from the farms. Farm women can be away easier in the middle of the day, not only because of the home work, but also on account of the children being in school at that time. The luncheon which the city and rural folk had together at this mid-day meeting gave them a chance to get acquainted, and together they planned the missionary work of the church. The rural women were put on the committees of the society, and this broke down the last barriers. As a result of these changes, the membership of the missionary society doubled; and from that day to this the relationship has been most cordial.

"The city women got the point of view of the women

from the country, and no one ever accuses the city members any more of being stuck-up," is the explanation one of the officers gave of the matter.

"We can't tell which is which, any more," is the way one of the members explained the friendly relationship now existing between the two groups.

"The greatest need of our women's missionary societies is a program which will include more rural women," is the conclusion of Mrs. W. M. Alexander, who has held many district and state offices in missionary societies in Missouri. "As a rule, our city members do not know our country women," she continued, "and the reverse is also true."

In a certain county in the East there are twenty-one churches of one denomination. One of these twenty-one is a strong city church, with three hundred members in its women's missionary society. The other twenty churches are rural; with two exceptions they are without women's missionary organizations of any kind. The women in this city church have offered to hold joint meetings with the women of any and every rural church in the county.

If all our city churches would adopt a similar policy, it would mean much to the cause of missions as well as to the rural women who are interested in this way. May we not consider as a definite program for our city churches, during the coming year, similar cooperation with the women in all near-by rural churches?

Another definite suggestion for rural churches is the organization of "circuit societies," in places where there are too few members to have a missionary society in a

single church. The average country church has only seventy-two members. If approximately half of these members are adults and half of the adults are women, we shall have in the average country church only eighteen women. It is not unlikely that half of these are either not interested in or unable to attend a women's society. Four fifths of all country churches are on circuits. Instead of trying to carry on a society with these nine women, would it not be better for them to unite with the other women on the circuit and have a "circuit missionary society"? Since two thirds of our farm families have automobiles, this plan is proving practical, and it is meeting the needs of rural women. The women of the South inaugurated this plan for their small churches; over a hundred "circuit societies" have been organized there already. As a practical plan for the rural women of the church, we feel that it has great possibilities and will have the help of our great national agencies.

We are next interested in the proposal to consolidate all our women's societies in the small country churches. Some denominations have already adopted this unified plan and are finding that it fits the needs of their rural churches. In city churches there are plenty of women, as a rule, for both a foreign missionary society and a home missionary society, and for a ladies' aid society as well, even though each woman may belong to but one organization. In rural churches, however, the numbers are so limited that only one woman's organization can exist. If some organizing secretaries insist on keeping the three organizations separate, the chances

are that both the missionary societies, and the ladies' aid also, in at least half of the churches, will fail, as is indicated by the surveys already mentioned.

A rural program for the women of the church must first of all include a local joint organization in rural churches for the foreign and the home mission work. In the second place, along with its children's organizations, its finances, its publicity, its mission study, its young people's work, it must include in its program a committee for community service in the local parish which would carry on the activities now performed by the ladies' aid society. This would give each church one unified missionary organization which would fit the needs of rural people. The phenomenal growth of the home demonstration clubs among farm women during the last five years, with as many as forty thousand members in some single states, indicates to some extent how the farm women would respond to one unified women's organization in each rural church. Why not proceed at once to designate a whole year in women's missionary societies as "Rural Women's Year"?

A NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE RURAL MINISTRY

Although our chief concern in this study is that the layman will have a larger place in the advancement of rural religion, yet it is recognized by all that the pastor is the leader in all rural church progress. Wherever churches are gaining ground, the pastor is the one person who is usually responsible for such success.

A certain national church secretary once described the success of a minister thus: "Brother So-and-so has

worked up from the bottom. He began in the rural pastorate and has been steadily advanced until he is now in a city church." If this national board secretary, and others whose counsel we seek, speak of the rural ministry as "at the bottom" of the ecclesiastical ladder, it is a question whether a large number of young men will look to the rural pastorate as a life-work. A rural field may be less difficult to serve, but it likewise offers a much greater opportunity for a pastor to build Christian character into the lives of his parishioners. At any rate, kingdom-building is not in the city on the one hand and in the country on the other; it is one unified task. Both rural and city pastors have their honored places of responsibility. The secretaries of rural work in our national boards are doing much to honor the rural minister and to dignify his task.

The best way to honor a man who wants to serve his fellow-men is to give him an unlimited field for work. This is what the rural minister asks of his denomination: a big field, a hard task, and fair recognition in the national councils of the church. We would then make the definite suggestion that a national church policy toward rural pastors should include the organization of larger rural parishes, and with more financial support for providing the pastor with necessary equipment.

This is a day of specialists in every field. An extension worker in a state college of agriculture used to give a "general talk on better farming." Now farmers will not go to hear such speakers. They wish to listen to a specialist in sheep raising, or in dairying, or in vegetable gardening, or in some other subject. If we gave rural pastors a chance to specialize in this way, one

would no doubt select preaching and evangelism, another religious education, and a third the social and recreational work of the church, each becoming a specialist in his chosen field.

Another change in the new rural life is the present-day enlargement of communities. Rural life is on wheels today. It is motor-driven. Two farmers out of every three in the entire country own automobiles. The church parish likewise should be enlarged.

There was a time when a church program which consisted only of preaching satisfied the rural people. It was their sole opportunity for getting instruction in religious life, and, also, almost their only contact with the "outside world." But now, thirty million people receive their mail daily on rural routes. The telephone and the radio also afford them contacts with the outside world. Consequently, they are not satisfied with a church program that consists only of preaching. They want the church to organize and furnish a social program, and to stress more and more the religious education of their children.

But let us see what our national program for rural ministers has been in the past. One third of all the rural ministers combine some other occupation with the work of the ministry.[5] In the South and the Southwest, this proportion is nearly one half. Such ministers evidently cannot specialize in religious education or be active in other specialized fields. They can only preach on Sunday, make "sick calls," and look after funerals and weddings. They are limited in their program, of course, by their financial income, but they are

[5] Data from the Institute of Social and Religious Research.

in what we call a "vicious circle": because they only preach, people pay them only small salaries; and because they get small salaries, they must have outside occupation which leaves them time only for preaching. Only nineteen per cent of the country churches have ministers who serve just one church, and it is well-nigh impossible for a "circuit rider" to specialize.

Some of the national church boards are organizing what they call "the larger parish," which is providing for adequate salaries, specialization, a new emphasis on religious education, and a social program. In the far-famed Potato Belt of northern Maine, in a rolling country of lakes, rivers, and mountains, about seventy miles from the New Brunswick border, is one of these larger parishes. It covers an area thirty-five miles long and ten miles wide. It includes three towns, three hamlets, and a dozen open-country neighborhoods. Its residents are farmers, lumbermen, and guides. Because it is still a new country with great distances, dense forests, and severe winters, one might think that it should be satisfied with a "preaching program" only and with long waits between the sermons, at that. But let us see what it really does have.

At the head of the parish is an experienced minister who specializes in preaching and evangelism. Each year he organizes a house-to-house evangelistic campaign which reaches every family in that great area of three hundred and fifty square miles. Two other workers assist him in the Sunday preaching services, and on a recent Sunday eighteen services were held in fifteen different centers.

One of this pastor's assistants in this larger parish is

director of religious education. He supervises the dozen or more church schools, trains the teachers, sets up the standards of work, and conducts the daily vacation Bible schools. In one of his communities his Sunday school teachers had an attendance record of ninety-seven per cent; in another, ninety-eight per cent. One of his schools had an increase in membership during the past year of thirty-four per cent. Daily vacation Bible schools in a sparsely settled frontier country where there are dense forests and untraversed hills is an example to encourage other churches more favorably located!

The other assistant is the social director. He not only has charge of all the church social life, but puts on pageants and plays and regular motion-picture entertainments as well. A truck, called by the children "Big Jerry," serves both to transport his motion-picture equipment and to bring the children to the daily vacation Bible schools. "On Sundays Big Jerry is the busiest truck in the state of Maine," the people report.

What are the advantages of this "larger parish" organization? In the first place, it has one common budget. This means that the larger and stronger communities can help to bear the financial burdens of the smaller and weaker ones, which would be neglected without some such organization. There is a saving of expense, also, in this plan, since the same equipment serves the purposes of three men instead of one. They all use the same motion-picture equipment and the same truck.

In the second place, this plan serves an area rather than a church. It leaves no untouched homes, espe-

cially the isolated homes which are usually neglected in many other regions. In most of rural America "churches overlap," but parishes do not meet. The larger parish includes all the homes in the large area, just as the county school system does.

Thirdly, laymen want to see a "big program," and many of them, therefore, have at times, during recent years, felt ashamed of their little country church. In this larger parish plan, they find a carefully worked-out and systematic program, with weekly half-day conferences of the three directors and monthly workers' councils of the entire parish.

The type of religious program found in the larger-parish plan appeals to college men who are absorbed in similar work in the college Young Men's Christian Association, and who are considering the field of the church as their life work. As a national church policy, it appeals both to laymen and to ministers.

A NATIONAL POLICY OF CHURCH COOPERATION

We all want the rural church to succeed. No one desires this as much as the rural people themselves. But they feel helpless and discouraged and are waiting for the church at large to come to their help.

The statesmen of our churches who have been making the recent surveys have shown us, without any doubt, that for a rural church to succeed, it must have a resident pastor. The circuit rider, though sacred to American church history, must be relegated to the pages of history, and the church of the present day must have a full-time pastor. But how is a small rural church going

to support a resident pastor? There are not enough people in the average congregation to pay the necessary bills.

We also learn from our leaders in the field of religious education that any church, to perform its task of building Christian character, must have additional rooms and equipment for the various age groups or departments. Leaders must also be trained to teach and to direct the activities. Men of vision must be in charge who can apply the gospel to present-day problems. But whence are these leaders to come and these rooms and this needed equipment? Let a veteran rural church worker describe the situation as it really is:

"A typical rural congregation will consist of a few faithful members, a few children and young people, and a few who are there because some others are there. In many cases there is no choir and often there is no organist, unless the pastor performs that task. Frequently no liturgical service can be used, and sometimes even the hymns must be omitted because there is no one to lead the singing. And it often happens, also, that no one can be found to teach a class in Sunday school. Is it any surprise, then, that such a church cannot propagate itself and is not an efficient organization?" [6]

Where are the young people who are to come forward and take their places of responsibility in the rural church? In a previous chapter we tried to show that leaders are not just "discovered"; they must be trained. Large city or town churches send their young people to training conferences, but a census of those present at

[6] Reverend Walter Frederick, Schenectady, New York, State field worker for the Lutheran Church.

one of these conferences will easily reveal the fact that the rural delegates are missing.

Where are the college students who are eager to shape the policies of the rural church and about whose enthusiasm we hear so much? For six years the writer spent much of his time visiting colleges and theological seminaries in an effort to enlist students in rural church work. At present he is in a university with over five thousand students. He therefore has at least the opportunity to know something of the attitude of the average college student. In almost every instance where the college man turns his back upon the rural church, it is because of the sectarianism which he finds there and which divides people into small groups.

Why do not the progressive farmers themselves make all these readjustments, consolidate their churches, do away with competitive churches, and plan strong centralized organizations? They would if they knew how. They are waiting for the church at large to adopt a national policy of rural church cooperation. Some are weary of waiting, and, unfortunately, they are throwing off all denominational supervision and are organizing union or community churches. It is claimed that over a thousand of these "community churches" have been organized within the last few years. As a rule, the policy of our national church bodies has been, in the past, to discourage local church organizations from uniting.

In a certain little hamlet two small competitive churches have existed for several years. Each year the conviction has become stronger among the laymen in these two congregations that they should unite. At

length they put the matter to a vote in the two churches. One body voted one hundred per cent in favor of the union, and in the other church, ninety-six per cent favored it. Only one of the two organizations had a pastor, and he also favored the plan. The supervising official of one of these two denominations heard of the move and came to stop it. He told the people that a union undenominational church was usually not a success. In this, of course, he was right.

"What, then, is the best method of uniting two small competitive churches?" they asked.

He explained that they should unite in some regular denomination rather than to form an undenominational church, but he did not encourage them, because it might mean losing one of his churches.

After he left, the people voted again on the question. This time they decided to unite in a third denomination. The supervisor heard of this and returned again, this time to tell them that if they insisted on "leaving" the denomination, they could do so, but they could not use the church building, for the denomination and not the local organization held the deed to it. Nevertheless the two congregations completed the union arrangement. But to their great consternation, at the succeeding annual meeting of his denomination, the pastor of this church was sent back to ask the people of his faith to withdraw from this union and to continue with the old competitive arrangement.

"This is an exceptional case," you protest? The secretary of the state council of churches in this state claims that there are thirty-two communities in the western half of this same state where the members have

tried to unite local congregations, but where the union arrangement has been stopped by some overhead denominational official.

Ralph Adams, Secretary of the Department of Rural Work in the Reformed Church in the United States, says, "Only too often when an official says, 'The time is not quite ripe for church cooperation,' he simply means 'The time is not ripe for my denomination to make a scoop.'" As a matter of fact, we are all most heartily in favor of church cooperation, in case both churches propose to unite with our own particular denomination. The need for church cooperation is urgent. Roads, transportation, enlarging community life, and agricultural cooperative movements are all helping. May we not expect that our great denominations shall work out some national policy with this end in view.

Obviously, the first move in church unification should be between small churches of the same denomination. Not long ago I visited a country community which had two churches of the same denomination only a mile and a half apart. They were on a state road and were both served by the same pastor. A most common occurrence is to find churches two and three miles apart, but these churches were built in the days of mud roads, before the days of automobiles. Just as the county or district superintendent of schools consolidates small school districts, so we need church officials of districts or states to centralize our churches.

Three methods are proposed for uniting small competitive churches of different denominations. The first is for two or more churches to sever their connections with their denominations and together organize one un-

denominational or union church. This method is not usually a success. Union churches soon lose their missionary enthusiasm. If they lose their minister, their pulpit usually remains vacant for a long time, because there is no organization from which they may get a new pastor.

The second method for unification is the federation of churches. The two separate churches keep their organizations as before, but simply worship together, employing the same pastor. Often they worship in one church building for six months and in the other building the other half of the year. Both sides are usually on the look-out to see that their particular denomination gets its share of everything. This method is to be recommended only as a forerunner of something very much better.

The third method is the one many denominations are finding most satisfactory; it is called the trading of churches. The same two denominations are in two separate communities. In the first community they both unite in one denomination, and go into the other denomination in the other community. Neither denomination loses in its total membership or equipment by this method. Each community gets the full time and service of a resident pastor. This enables the pastor in each community to give more time to the Sunday school and to the young people's society, as well as to pastoral work. An extra church building is made available in each community for religious-education uses. All types of community work can be undertaken in each parish by the churches, which were limited before by the competitive arrangement.

The question might arise, "How can these churches unite if they have different religious convictions?" The answer is that they unite as far as the administration or organization of their church is concerned. They retain their own personal beliefs. As a matter of fact, this is true in each individual church; the members do not all think alike. The pastor of a united church gives sympathetic consideration to the personal beliefs of all, but by thus uniting as a working organization they become a great force for Christianizing their community.

One afternoon three years ago, a District Superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church drove into a little village and found three churches where there should have been only one. The village was so small that not even one of the three churches was able to support a pastor. Finding all the pulpits vacant, the superintendent called together the three congregations to see if some unified plan for their future could be devised. The respective memberships of the three churches as reported to him were as follows: Baptists, twenty-five; Methodists, twenty-five; Presbyterians, twelve. It was evident that they would need to unite in order to carry on a successful church program.

This may seem like an exceptional case, but the Institute of Social and Religious Research tells us that four out of five rural churches in the United States are competitive. It should be explained, in connection with this statement, however, that this competition among churches is a result not of religious but of social causes. Sectarianism is simply an index of the community's individualism. It is not a by-product of religion.

If seventy-five people belong to a Grange and twenty-five of them disagree with the policy of the officers of that Grange, they can stay away from the meetings, but they cannot get a charter to organize another Grange in the same community; the state and national authorities of the Grange will not countenance such competition.

Similarly, if one group in the community disagrees with the policy of the school directors, it cannot build another schoolhouse in that same district, because the county and state school authorities will not allow it.

But in the church, if twenty-five people disagree with the rest, they can organize another congregation! The national or state or district authorities have not stopped them in the past. In fact, it was the supervising officials who, in the past, usually organized the competitive church. This is why the individualism of communities appears in churches more than in Granges, schools, or in other institutions.

At the mass meeting attended by the twenty-five Baptists, twenty-five Methodists, and twelve Presbyterians mentioned above, the District Superintendent spoke about the desirability of their uniting into one church. They all agreed enthusiastically that such a union was imperative. The Superintendent asked the twenty-five Baptists how many of them would be willing to come into the Methodist church. Only three consented. He then asked the twenty-five Methodists to vote on the question of their joining the Baptist church. Only two out of the twenty-five voted affirmatively. These votes may seem to indicate an unfriendly spirit between these two churches; but it must be remembered that the spirit of competition in rural America has been dominant for

a century, and the spirit of cooperation, for less than a decade.

The District Superintendent finally asked the Methodists to join the Baptist church for two years as an experiment, assuring them that if, at the end of that time, they desired to go back into the "Methodist fold," he would reorganize the Methodist church for them. They agreed to this unanimously. The Baptists then asked the Methodist District Superintendent to furnish them a Methodist minister. The Presbyterians agreed to join the Baptist church and donated their building for the use of the combined congregation. This cooperative arrangement illustrates not only the distrust found among competitive rural churches, but also the way in which this suspicion may be changed into a spirit of cooperation and good-will by the Christian administration of district and national supervisors.

In the same district over which this Superintendent presided was another little village which had a small Baptist and a small Methodist church. When the Baptists here heard what had happened in the neighboring village, how the Methodists had joined their denomination, they deeded their property here over to the Methodists and united not only the equipment, but the congregations as well. There is a deep-seated desire among laymen for church consolidation.

One morning I stood on the steps of a church in a small town in the Southwest and counted eight churches, none of them more than two blocks away. This town was the seat of a state college of agriculture, and the students who were to be the future rural leaders of the state spent four years under the influence of that sec-

tarian competition. By way of explanation, it should be said that the laymen of two of those churches had voted unanimously to unite their two congregations, but that the move was stopped by one of the overhead officials of one of the denominations concerned.

In Davis, California, the seat of the agricultural college of another state, four denominations are uniting into one church. The future rural leaders of California who spend their four college years here will go out with the conviction that cooperation, which is so widespread in economic affairs in California, can succeed also in religious life.

In the first case mentioned, not one of the eight churches has a building adequate for a social church program of the type which now appeals to students. The total amount used for ministers' salaries, when divided among the eight ministers, is not sufficient. Not one of these churches is making progress.

On the other hand, the entire annual budget of the church at Davis, California, which is a much smaller community, has increased from $2,600 to $11,000 during the past five years. In addition to the pastor, the church employs a director of religious education and a parish director. During the past year the church has erected a new building costing over $100,000, its type of architecture harmonizing with that of the grammar school and the high school, the two buildings between which the church is located.

The official board of this church includes members from nearly every denomination. The pastor's letterhead contains the words, "Cooperating with the Congregational, Baptist, Methodist Episcopal, and the Presby-

terian Boards of Education." This is an illustration of the result of a national policy of rural-church co-operation.

College students like to be affiliated with a "going concern." Seven Bible classes for college men were conducted by this church last year, in addition to the Sunday morning student discussion group. Students who have received their training here during the last four years have gone out over the state to become presidents of young people's societies, superintendents of Sunday schools, and leaders in Scout work. There are representatives of this college in seventeen foreign nations where they are helping to shape the policies of rural life there.

The church is helping to support one of these graduate students in India, where he is developing a Christian agricultural training school for boys. This same "Ag" student recently won a prize of two thousand rupees for having the most successful poultry flock in India.

The cooperative idea of the Davis church is spreading to communities near by. During the last two years, three churches within a radius of twenty-five miles of Davis have been organized on much the same basis. Two of these were wholly new organizations, while the third was a reorganization of an old church on the new plan. Word comes that a fourth new church is about to be organized with a similar purpose in the Carmichael Community, near Sacramento. Thus the church becomes, as was surely planned of God, the unifying factor of community life and the inspiration of all true cooperation.

"We consider that we have an ideal plan for an efficient rural church," said the Reverend N. M. Fiske, the pastor. "The opinions of all are respected, their interests maintained, their lives brought together in the accomplishment of a single purpose in the service of Christ." Such cooperative projects will undoubtedly be increased many times in the next decade, since our denominations are promoting national policies of rural-church cooperation.

The Home Missions Council and the Council of Women for Home Missions are carrying on a continuous educational campaign relative to church cooperation. Eleven states in the West and Northwest have state organizations promoted by the Home Missions Council, the purpose of these state organizations being to deal with all questions of comity. Dr. Charles E. Vermilya, the secretary of this national council, recently called together the supervising church officials in one of these western states, Nevada, and during a conference of a day and a half, eleven exchanges of churches were made, thus removing competition in those fields. In Utah, no Protestant church is in a competitive location.

"Our job for the denominations is to find out that we are allies, not competitors," says Dr. Vermilya. "There isn't a Protestant denomination in America," he adds, "that is not short of ministers. And there are thousands of communities in home mission territory which the churches are not reaching."

The denominational leaders are rapidly becoming committed to the policy of church cooperation, but the educational process to bring about the necessary adjustments will be a long one. The Reverend M. A. Dawber,

the superintendent of the Department of Rural Work of the Methodist Episcopal Church, said recently:[7]

"Denominational competition is the outstanding curse of country life at the present moment. It is the barrier to every approach to a successful rural life that has so far been conceived. Unless the Protestant churches can see their way to exemplify a spirit of brotherhood among themselves, they had better cease preaching brotherhood to a non-Christian world."

During recent years, however, more progress has been made in church cooperation than in any period during the last century.[8] Five thousand ministers and two and a half million laymen have come together in "The

7 "Uniting Protestantism," in the *Rural Evangel.*

8 The following statement of principles was adopted March 2, 1925, at a joint meeting of a committee on the rural church, appointed by the Board of Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church and a committee appointed by the Department of Rural Work of the Methodist Board of Home Missions and Church Extension. "A rural commission should be raised in each district and be composed of the district superintendent and at least two ministers and two laymen, to study church groupings, prevent parish overlapping, and arrange territory so that each rural inhabitant is the responsibility of some rural church. They should advise with the church authorities over denominational readjustments needed within the territory covered by the district.

"On some geographical or other satisfactory basis, churches should be grouped for cooperative endeavor. The churches grouped might share in the support and use of a director of recreation and religious education.

"In communities where the Methodist Episcopal Church has full responsibility, there the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension should render preferred aid and cooperate in adequately caring for the work. Where the responsibility is divided with other denominations, equable adjustments should be made. To illustrate, where four denominations are each competing in four towns, it would be better to agree to accept full responsibility in one than to use missionary funds and man-power in carrying on a competitive denominational program."

United Church of Canada." Nearly all Methodist, Congregational, and Presbyterian churches have joined in this merger, which includes thirty per cent of the inhabitants of the Dominion. But here again it must be remembered that this has been an educational process, and that it has taken over twenty years to achieve this result.

Ohio is the outstanding state in the Union in which this educational process is now being carried on. A cooperative spirit among the churches is being rapidly created by the State Council of Churches, with its nineteen active committees, its state-wide Protestant legislative and law-enforcement program, its state conferences, attended last year by 750 pastors, its committee on comity, which has already eliminated competition from eighty rural communities, and its interdenominational journal published weekly and circulated throughout the state.

Shall we not look forward to the time in the near future when every denomination shall have a clear-cut national policy of rural church cooperation?

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Our chief national interest in the rural church in the past has been the contribution it has made to the nation as a whole. Instead of this attitude, we are compelled by the present situation to consider what contribution the nation can now make to the rural church.

There are many rural church problems that cannot

be solved by local communities, but which demand a nation-wide policy of the denominations.

Four fifths of our rural population are members of no church. A nation-wide policy of rural evangelism is needed. Such a plan should include the dividing of the unevangelized territory among the different local churches for intensive cultivation.

Single rural churches cannot employ trained directors of religious education. These specialists should work with groups of six or a dozen churches under the auspices of the district denominational supervisors.

The women's societies in rural churches need to be coordinated into one organization. Among small churches that are on circuits, it is sometimes necessary to combine these groups into circuit societies. There is a great opportunity for women's missionary societies in town and city churches to work with and for rural women. A nation-wide interest in rural women on the part of national missionary agencies is now needed.

Rural ministers need larger fields and adequate equipment. The efficiency of many promising rural pastors is cut in two by our ofttimes present denominational policy of asking a man to become pastor of a church in a small competitive parish where his field of work is limited and his income for the proper provision for his family is always in jeopardy. Our new rural church national secretaries are dignifying the place of the rural pastor in the councils of the denomination. Rural pastors are asking from their denominations a chance for large service, and with more adequate equipment.

A nation-wide policy of church cooperation is grow-

ing in the hearts of Christian people everywhere. Where two small rural churches of the same denomination are near together, national or district church officials are, in many instances, helping them to unite into one efficient self-propagating organization. Where there are two small churches of different denominations occupying one parish, in case this parish is large enough to support only one church, national or district church officials are arranging for the exchanging of churches. By this arrangement, these two denominations unite into one local organization here, all joining one of the two churches, usually the stronger of the two. At the same time this arrangement is made, these same two denominations unite in some other competitive parish. In this other instance, both congregations join the other or second denomination of the first field. By this plan each field is given a strong unified organization instead of the unchristian sectarian competition. The personal denominational convictions of the members who join the new church are sympathetically guarded in both instances.

Church cooperation is an educational process, rather than a legal formula. It must be patiently taught. National and State organizations, such as the Home Missions Council, the Woman's Council for Home Missions, the Federal Council of Churches, the National and State Councils of Religious Education, and the Missionary Education Movement, are engaged in this task of teaching church cooperation. But to make it a success we must begin to practise it in our own community.

A RURAL DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CAN GET THE HELP OF COLLEGE STUDENTS FOR DAILY VACATION BIBLE SCHOOLS AND ALSO FOR WINTER ACTIVITIES IN RURAL CHURCHES. THE STUDENTS PICTURED ABOVE HAVE GIVEN BIBLE PLAYS IN MANY RURAL CHURCHES. BELOW IS A CHURCH ADVISORY BOARD IN DAVIS, CALIFORNIA, ON WHICH SEVEN DENOMINATIONS ARE REPRESENTED.

THE LITTLE NAVAJO INDIAN GIRL IS SHOWN AT THE LEFT AS A CHURCH VISITOR FOUND HER, AND AT THE RIGHT AS SHE LOOKED AFTER THE VISIT OF THE HOME MISSIONARY. CHANGING THE LIVES AND IDEALS OF PEOPLE IN NEGLECTED AREAS IS THE MAIN PURPOSE OF ALL HOME MISSION AGENCIES.

THIS RURAL CHURCH HAD ONLY THREE MEMBERS UNTIL A DISTRICT DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CAME. SHORTLY AFTER, THE GROUP ABOVE WAS BAPTIZED INTO MEMBERSHIP. BELOW IS SHOWN A WORKERS' CONFERENCE AT CRYSTAL LAKE, ILLINOIS, WHICH MEETS MONTHLY WITH THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TO PLAN THE CHURCH PROGRAM.

AT NOVATO, CALIFORNIA, IS LOCATED THE COMMUNITY HOUSE ABOVE, WHICH IS MANAGED BY A COMMUNITY COUNCIL, PICTURED BELOW. THE MEMBERS OF THIS COUNCIL REPRESENT A NUMBER OF NATIONALITIES AND SEVERAL DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS FAITHS.

VI

A PROGRAM FOR THE RURAL CHURCH

If we want to learn how to raise alfalfa, we drive through the countryside and select the best fields; then we visit with the farmers who sowed those fields and learn from them their methods of cultivation. A course in farm management is not an outline which some college professor prepares; it is simply a description of the methods of successful farmers. A course in rural church management, it seems, should likewise be a study of successful churches. This method, then, is that which we shall follow as we undertake to make out a program for the rural church.

In selecting these successful churches, obviously we need a variety of fields, fields located in different sections of the country, and especially churches which are facing difficult problems. There are churches with better organized work than these which we have selected, of course, but they are such as have had fewer difficulties to overcome. As we travel to these fields together, let us make notes of the methods employed in each case and because of which the particular church is succeeding. A résumé of these notes will give us a program which we can well recommend for the rural church.[1]

The first stop in our journey is back in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, in Yancey County. We are now in the heart of the hills—romantic,

[1] The parishes mentioned in this chapter are all actual fields of work, and the descriptions are all true to the facts in each case.

beautiful hills—and in a land of coves, hidden valleys, small hillside farms, ragged clearings, and hospitable stalwart people. We are in a region of laurel and rhododendron; one of the two hundred and fifty counties in the Appalachians which have attracted so many novelists.

We have not come here to exploit these highlanders or to photograph their unused log cabins. We are eager to learn what place the church occupies in their lives of hardship and isolation. We stop for the night at Burnsville; and as we think about the difficulties of the day's travel, we are reminded that the church throughout all rural America was founded by sturdy circuit riders who pioneered through similar uncharted regions and endured countless hardships. The diary of the great Asbury, who crossed these mountains sixty times, is on the table, and we read in it the following account of a similar day's journey, made in the year 1788:

April 28. After getting our horses shod, we made a move for Holstein, and entered upon the mountains. . . . They are rough and difficult to climb. We were spoken to on our way by the most awful thunder and lightning, accompanied by heavy rain. We crept for shelter into a little dirty house where filth might have been taken from the floor with a spade; we felt the want of fire, but could get little wood to make it, and what we gathered was wet. At the head of Watawga we fed, and reached Ward's that night. Coming to the river next day, we hired a young man to swim over for the canoe, in which we crossed, while our horses swam to the other shore. The waters being up, we were compelled to travel an old road over the mountains. Night came on; I was ready to faint with a violent headache; the mountain was steep on both sides. I prayed to the Lord for help; presently a profuse sweat broke out upon me, and my fever entirely subsided. About nine o'clock we came to Grear's. This has been an awful journey to me."

What advances the church has made since the days of Asbury! The missionary in whose home we are now being entertained is provided with an automobile. His board of home missions gives him $200 a year for gasoline, and he travels to three of the four churches in his parish over state highways. With the aid of these roads he can reach every community once a week, for religious educational and pastoral work, as well as preach in three different communities every Sunday. There is running water in this manse, and also electricity from a dynamo turned by water which takes its rise on the slopes of Mt. Mitchell. The board which employs this missionary pastor insists that he shall have the best training possible. He has just returned from his Sabbatical year of study in Boston University, and his board allows him six weeks of study away from his parish each summer. The statement that the church takes better care of its foreign missionaries than of its workers in the homeland is becoming less true, and it is not at all true of this home missionary, Rev. Victor Detty.

This man has the whole of Yancey County for his community work, a job big enough to challenge the best strength of the youth of our land. He has three young women community workers who live in different communities and supervise the Sunday schools, teach Bible classes, organize recreational activities, hold mothers' meetings and conduct teachers' training classes. They help him in daily vacation Bible schools during the summer. During the past winter they taught week-day Bible schools with an enrolment of 290 children. The pastor tells us that education is the mountaineers' greatest need. One person out of ten is unable to read

and write, and one fourth of the mountain children between the ages of seven and thirteen do not attend school. The lack of roads here has limited the market facilities, one result of which is small incomes, and, hence, limited school taxes. Consequently, the church has established 200 mission schools in these 250 highland counties.

The newest phase of this mission work, we find, is its emphasis on health. Asbury, McKendree, and the other pioneer preachers here, prayed with the sick and went on their journey; but nowadays the church provides a visiting nurse to go back again and again to these homes of need. We find the work of this nurse in Yancey County most interesting.

"How many visits do you make in a month?" someone asks her.

"Last month I made ninety visits in eighty homes," she replies. "I examined throats in the Low Gap community which will be ready for the surgeon's inspection as soon as we hold our tonsil clinic. I found that a good many needed immediate attention.

"Besides this, I made eight surgical dressings for minor wounds, gave four baths, two olive-oil rubs, assisted in taking care of four cases of influenza, two cases of tonsilitis, swabbed out many sore throats, and gave instructions in four cases of tuberculosis which are receiving home treatment, advising reclining chairs, outdoor treatment with sleeping porches, and the usual T. B. instructions.

"I examined four mothers who were suffering from diseased teeth and gums, and for each advised medical treatment."

And so this is home mission work as it is carried on today? Some of us had thought it consisted only of preaching on Sunday!

"Oh, I have many things to do besides visiting the sick," the nurse continued. "My principal task is to keep people well. For the past eleven days I have been giving health talks in the daily vacation Bible school at Banks Creek. I am giving the senior girls there a course in home nursing. It will take four months for them to complete this course.

"I forgot to say that I test the eyes of all the children in school." She mentioned this as though it were just an extra chore.

"I am glad to say that my visits are met with interest and good-will. I am called in very often for advice."

As we watch her work and see the eagerness with which people appeal to her for help, we can almost see the crowds who gathered around Jesus in Galilee and brought their children that He might heal and bless them. But we must not tarry longer in this friendly visit to the Appalachian counties. We must hurry westward to other parishes.

As we review our visit here, certain facts stand out which point to the explanation of the success of the church in this field. A national board of missions is standing behind this pastor and his helpers, with sufficient salary, with transportation, with equipment, and, best of all, with helpful advice. He is a well-trained man, and his assistants have specialized training. They not only make "sick calls," but they make "health calls." His program includes not only the saving of the lost, but the religious training of the youth in such

a way that as they grow up, they will "increase in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." Although his field is large, yet his program is personal and intensive and practical.

Our next visit is in the heart of the Ozarks, again far from city streets and smoking factories. We stop at a little railway station called Springdale, in the northwest corner of Arkansas. From here we journey across country, fifty-five miles eastward, up rugged mountain roads, and fording gravelly streams, until at last we see, off there across the valley of King's River, the little village of Kingston.

Had our trip been ten years earlier, we should have found here nothing but a squalid mountain village with poverty and need, with ignorance and illiteracy on every side. No high school then existed in the entire county, and no Sunday school or resident minister was to be found within twenty miles. Wildcat stills then infested the mountains, and disease and irreligion lurked everywhere.

About this time a man and his wife, somewhere back in Indiana, had caught a vision of a life of missionary service. Backed by the gifts of a church in the city of Rochester, New York, which recognized this same call to heroic service, this devoted couple have, for ten crowded years, poured out their lives in gladsome service to the stalwart people of the Ozarks.

We park our cars in the shadow of the new church, and from its steps we see all about us a community that, within the last decade, has been born again. The pastor takes us into the first floor of his church building

to see his community hall, with its stage, bowling alley, reading-room and library, shower baths, dressing-rooms, and kitchens. On the second floor of the new church we find the sanctuary. A large Kimball pipe organ lifts our thoughts heavenward, and we find ourselves in a new world.

From here we look out on what the pastor calls the "institute building," a splendid house of three stories which accommodates 150 high-school students, and has provisions for the various departments of the school, a library, a basement fitted with a kitchen, dining-room, dressing-rooms, and other facilities. The basket-ball and volley-ball teams on the playground in front of us seem all the more strange because, in all this trip of fifty-five miles through the mountains, we have seen no such activities before.

The pastor points to a little white house near by and to the south and explains that it is "the agriculture building." These remote mountain coves, we find, are being made productive under the joint tutelage of the church and school. Out of this agricultural work has grown a canning factory. This adds ten thousand dollars to the annual income of the hillside farmers. Two years ago the schoolboys weighed up, between suns, sixty-one coops of capons. These were raised by the children of the school and Sunday school, and brought $1,641.63. Last year it took four days to weigh up the turkeys and capons. They brought in nearly $4,000. The boys also buy the cream from the farmers. At last report, in about ninety days they received cream worth a little over $700. The professor of these boys is president of the Grape Growers Association. Many

thousands of pounds of grapes are being marketed under his supervision. There are from fifty to ninety projects on as many farms. All the work of these projects is done by the boys. One visitor said that he knew the minute he entered the area from the appearance of the orchards and farm houses.

The girls "carry on" under the Home Economics teacher. This course covers everything that is to be done in the home. These girls have their own projects under the teacher's supervision. This has not only transformed the interior of the homes, but new homes have been built.

We look meditatively into the smiling valley below, and thence our eyes wander far away to the violet-blue knobs of Boston Mountain, Burney's Mountain, Big Sandy, and a circle of lesser hills that resemble huge rounded amethysts.

"There," says the pastor, "my parish is off that way to the south sixty miles, and off there to the east forty miles, and to the north thirty miles, and to the west twenty miles."

In the immediate parish there are 772 souls. In the political township 1,205, and there are two thousand more that should be reached from this center by the gospel of Jesus Christ. These people are living today in rather destitute circumstances and not in any high state of culture, but the important thing is not whether a given people now have a high state of culture, but whether they would live up to it if they had the opportunity. We ask ourselves if there is any other institution in America besides the church that can so change discouragement into hope, ignorance into learning, pov-

erty into prosperity, or isolated mountain settlements into centers of community pride.

We are curious to know how such work was ever started and what is the secret of this man's success. So we sit near and listen to him as he tells of his early experiences here and the things he had to overcome.

"When I told my college classmates that I intended to give my life to service among farming people, they informed me that I should be committing ecclesiastical suicide, for they said the church at large was not much interested as yet in rural work.

"When I first came here, I found the mountain exhorters telling the people that the end of the world was at hand. I told them the first Sunday that we were just beginning to live, and that these old Ozarks of ours were to grow more beautiful, and that we were to grow better every day. And so I began preaching evangelism, education, service, health, better homes, and better roads.

"But perhaps more than the preaching of it has been the practising of it. Agricultural training in the school has brought to it big boys who heretofore had not attended; girls have made marked improvement with their clothing and home management as a result of domestic science instruction; supervised recreation has taught folks how to play; the Colonial design of the new church, the ground plans and landscape improvement engender a love of the beautiful. The community hospital, made by remodeling the older church building, is the health center.

"But it has been a long pull. I had only been here a few weeks when one day I saw a dozen of my boys

and men drunk. I wrote to the county sheriff about the bootleggers who brought the 'wildcat whiskey' here, and he replied jokingly, asking me to arrest all the bootleggers I saw.

"It was no joke with me. I took him seriously. A week later another bootlegger put in his appearance. I went up to him, took him by the collar, showed him the sheriff's letter, and informed him that the days of bootlegging were over in Kingston. I told him if he ever came back, I'd harness him with log chains and drive him to the county jail.

"We had no more trouble until the Fourth of July. Word had come that a supply of whiskey was to be brought in through the Narrows. I loaded my shotgun and went down there and waited. That fellow was sent to the penitentiary for a year.

"We never had any trouble with our own people, but sometimes drunken mountaineers from away would try to break up our meetings. One time I asked a man to stop disturbing our Sunday night service. He wanted to know who would stop him, and asked if I wanted to fight.

" 'No, I don't want to fight,' I said. 'I would rather you would stay here and be quiet. But if you don't, I will pray God to give me such strength that I will give you the worst mauling that ever a man got on these mountains.' I then led him outside and he went quietly down the hill."

Here the pastor is suddenly called away to attend some matters down at the clinic which is conducted in the old church building. As he turns to go, one of our class asks him if this program "produces results."

He seems a little surprised at this question, for he has just told us of the high-school students trained, of the teacher of domestic science, and of the teacher of agriculture, of his health work, of the new canning factory, and, best of all, of the beautiful new church. But the questioner explains that he is only interested in "additions to the church." "How about the converts?"

The minister, the Reverend Elmer J. Bouher, then tells us of the fifty-nine additions to his church on Christmas Sunday, a large proportion of whom were men and women and their children, who came in from the remote corners of his big parish in the hill country.

As we leave, we cannot help asking ourselves if all the work of this mountain parish is not a demonstration of what the church may come to mean to people in the isolated corners of rural America.

And now as we review the work in this parish, in order to proceed with the formulating of our program for the rural church, we learn that a church building should have about it the atmosphere of worship; it should be artistic and beautiful, as this church is. We find that the program of this pastor emphasizes the transformation of human lives by their being born again, but that this church also stands four-square for law enforcement. The church people clean up the town, so that Christian principles shall control the community life. And finally we learn that a successful rural church program is based upon sound agriculture. The Lord can and does save souls who live in poverty, but a community must be prosperous in order to maintain a stable church life. We cannot help noticing that the transformation that has taken place in this mountain community, in the

final analysis, has been due to the fact that this missionary pastor and his wife have accepted the missionary ideals of service for their lives.

The next friendly visit on our trip West is to the arid state of Wyoming. The meaning of the word Wyoming, in the Indian language, is "Large Plains." We ascend the dry, sunny plateau of the Rockies, and from the car windows we see only unbroken stretches fringed with sage-brush and greasewood, until at length we enter the valley of the North Platte, an irrigated section where half the population of the state dwells.

Here our interest is attracted by the many stacks of alfalfa and timothy. A great number they seem to us, despite the fact that the annual rainfall is only thirteen inches. The friendly North Platte, rising out of the Sierra Madre, skirts the Laramie Mountains and brings abundant water to the irrigation ditches of this wide valley. At first sight we think this must be a prosperous land; but as we become better acquainted, we find that nearly every farm is heavily mortgaged and that several banks have had to close their doors during the last three years.

We stop now at Lingle, in the Goshen Hole. Both banks here, we learn, have recently failed. Discouragement and pessimism are everywhere. The ranchers who have brought their farms from raw land to productive condition are facing foreclosure and the loss of their ten years of labor. Let us see if the church means anything to these discouraged western ranchers.

The director of the Town and Country Department of one of our great national home mission boards, Dr.

Warren H. Wilson, who for fifteen years has been a modern prophet of religion for the countryside, sent Reverend Harry E. Bicksler to be the pastor in this community of Lingle half a dozen years ago. Under his leadership and Dr. Wilson's inspiration, this demonstration parish has developed until it now includes more than half of Goshen County, and it has become known as the "Goshen Hole Larger Parish." Fort Laramie, Red Cloud, Veteran, and Cottier are the main towns, with Lingle, where we now are, as the center of the parish. There are three pastors and one social worker who minister to the five churches and the half dozen outstations. A big Philadelphia church has stood behind these four workers financially, while they have homesteaded this western half of Goshen County for the Kingdom of Christ.

It is Sunday afternoon, about five o'clock, and we find the young pastor at Lingle resting at the manse.

"I am one of the few people in this country," he remarks, "who is not discouraged. This has been the best of my five years in Wyoming. My daily vacation Bible school which has just closed has been better this year than ever before. We have had over fifty additions to the church in the entire parish.

"I preached twice today," he continues, "and visited a sick parishioner, but aside from that I have had an easy day. We are giving a drama from the story of Moses at the evening service tonight. We do this once a month. This has been a full week, and tomorrow begins another like it." Here he gets up and invites us to see his new community house.

"I just want you to see the wonderful heating plant

the church back in Philadelphia sent us," he says proudly as he shows us around. "They even paid the freight. Before the last bank closed, we had plans all made for someone to install this for us, but having no money, we did it ourselves. It came this past week. With only one day's notice, we had a well-organized community day, with thirty-five men ready to work; and they sure did come here with the idea of working! Between you and me, this working together is one of the advantages of being broke."

As we sit down in the neat little church in front of the big new hall, he begins again.

"This has been our biggest year in five for additions to the church. I wish I could report as good a financial condition of our people as I can a spiritual condition. If our church can help solve their farm financial problems, we shall have solved their big difficulty. I am now starting the organization of a farm finance association for the purpose of getting loans on the amortization plan and thus keep off these foreclosures. We have also added two small industries, the pottery kiln you see down there, and a loom. Both are helping.

"You will be interested in another thing which we are trying out tomorrow. Under the leadership of our larger parish committee, we are having a meeting in this community house for all the officers of the five churches. At the afternoon session we shall meet in groups, all the trustees of the five churches in one group, all the Sunday-school teachers in another, and the officers of the missionary societies in another, so that every officer will have a chance to discuss his work with others who have the same problems."

It is hard for us who, in our home cities, think of the church only as a place to go and listen, to realize how many sides of the life of a community a church like this can touch.

As we walk back to the manse, the pastor tells us of some of his community problems:

"During the last few months our town has been troubled, even more than usual, by the methods of our local hotel and of our pool hall. Both have had a bad name, but we could do nothing about it. The night before our congregational meeting, a whiskey runner was shot right there in front of this hotel, with the goods on him. At our meeting, we decided it was time for us to take active steps to stop this lawbreaking. We arranged to urge the prosecution of the hotel proprietor, and have been advised that the law will be carried out to the fullest extent. The trial will come next month. Finding that we mean business, the hotel proprietor decided to sell out. We found a man with a good record who was willing to buy; but he needed our financial help to get started, for he was in debt, as most everyone is in this country.

"I wrote a complete statement of the case to the church back in Philadelphia, suggesting that they risk the sum of $150 to bind his contract, in the interest of the moral life of this community. I stated that I was not absolutely sure as to the safety of such an investment on a purely financial basis. They replied to my letter as fast as a telegram could come, sending the money and including the first payment of the pottery kiln. God has been good to us in giving us such good friends in that city church."

The sun is now setting over Laramie Peak in the distance. The men are out in the fields, fixing the water ditches for the night. This place seems so lonesome, so far away from everything! What is it in his religion that makes such a man as this pastor leave home and friends to spend his life in this open, unmade country?

"Oh, I love the place and I love the people," he says, with hopeful enthusiasm. "In a few years the people here are going to win their way back to prosperity. As they do, I want to have here a strong work for Christ and His Kingdom."

As we try to pick out the factors in the program of this church that make it a success, we come back again to a few outstanding elements which were present in the other churches also, such as, a resident pastor, emphasis on religious education, and adequate buildings and equipment. We note also that a strong city church in the East is standing loyally behind this rural parish, and is making its success possible. In this church, as in the others, the spiritual element is first, but this does not interfere with the social program which is being carried on in the community hall. The fifty additions to the church indicate the pastor's interest in the saving of souls. We note also that he is trying to save his people's farms from foreclosure. We arrive at the conclusion that "social welfare" becomes "Christian service," when done in the name of the Master and to build up His cause. This church is unique in the way the national board of missions has organized it into "a larger parish." Instead of the denominational authorities dividing this pastor's field

in order to emphasize sectarian differences, they have enlarged his parish for the sake of the larger interests of the Kingdom.

Our train creeps along through the rolling pasture lands of southern Wyoming, crosses Utah and the arid stretches of Nevada, and finally begins its welcome descent into the productive fields and forests of the Pacific Coast. We leave the cities to the tourists, and seek, for our next friendly visit, some quiet rural village off the beaten tracks of travel. On the Redwood Highway, an hour's journey north from San Francisco, our attention is attracted by the billboards on which we read the words, "The Valley of No Regrets." Let us stop in this valley, and see for ourselves if this can be true.

It is a real farming community, and we soon learn that the poultry industry is one of the valley's principal sources of income. As many as five thousand white hens are kept on some of these ten-acre farms. The walnut groves attract us, too. Everything seems new and strange. Almond trees, peaches, pears, cherries, and apricots are plentiful. Being only twenty-seven miles from San Francisco, the production of milk and cheese for the city market is one of the several thriving industries. Many other things about the markets, the scenery, and the climate interest us; but we cannot let them distract us from our purpose. We are here to learn one thing: What contribution, if any, is the church making to a rural community like this?

Years ago, this valley was a great Spanish rancho of thirteen thousand acres. It passed from one Spanish

owner to another, until, during Civil War days, it was patented as United States property and subdivided into small farms. With the early settlers came the saloons, which introduced both gambling and drinking. Sabbath desecration and lawlessness were the community's principal characteristics. Thirty years of this free life passed into history, leaving its imprint on the morals and the character of the place, without a Protestant church in the entire valley to raise even a faint voice of protest. At length, in 1896, a church building was erected, but for nineteen years it stood as a silent witness to the helplessness and failure of irregular services and absentee pastors. Students attending a near-by theological school used this church as a place to try out their pulpit powers, and received in return enough money to pay for their weekly meal tickets at the seminary. A few years ago a man and his wife settled in the place, began to build a manse and, at the same time, to build religion into the lives of the people about them.

We wander up a little street in this town of Novato, lined with rambling bungalows, rose-covered and framed by palms and hydrangea blooms, until we reach the little church, which we soon find to be the heart of "the valley of no regrets." But first we learn from the pastor the reason for this change.

"We went into this enterprise on faith," he says, as he begins to recount the story of his six years of service here. Then, pointing to the community house next door, he adds, "Any congregation that could hardly raise a total budget of $600 a year, and then, within two years' time, could pull itself together and put

$20,000 into property and equipment like that, shows what I mean when I talk about faith!"

Some of our visitors show disappointment as they learn that the membership of this church is only eighty-seven and the enrolment in the Sunday school scarcely a hundred. Seeing our interest in numbers, he leads us outside and pointing down the street begins to explain.

"You must remember," he says, "that there were nine saloons along this little street at one time! You must also know that eighty per cent of the population of this valley were patrons of these institutions! Nine saloons and no church for half a century explain the size of our membership! But thank God we're gaining!

"When I came here, almost all the young men were of the gambling, boozing crowd. Last Sunday Mr. Stubke had twenty of them in his Bible class. One of the two who joined the church a week ago is an ex-convict. I am not complaining; only saying that, given an equal chance, the church will win.

"Three weeks ago two fellows from here each paid a $500 fine on liquor charges. Last Sunday one of them came to tell me he was going to take no more chances, adding, 'Hereafter I'm goin' to track the law.' We're having victories, but the battle has been long and hard."

"We are trying to discover," we explain to the pastor, "why some churches win, while others fail; why some communities love their church, while others only bear with theirs. What has moved this church from the circumference of this community's thought in towards its very heart?"

"Let us walk over to the community house," he says, as he leads the way to the building next door and conducts us through the auditorium, the club rooms, the library, the kitchen, and the gymnasium. We seat ourselves in the reading alcove, in front of the big stone fireplace, with shelves of books on either side, and he tells us the secret of his success in this Marin County village on the Coast.

"The only way we can reach these people," he begins, "is to give them a program of activities which they consider worth while." At this he goes to his desk, gets his diary, and fingering through it resumes his explanation.

"I just want to show you what those activities are which our people seem to want," he says.

The list he reads to us includes home-talent plays, classes in music, dairymen's meetings, children's parties, masonic suppers, firemen's socials, school-board meetings, farm bureau gatherings, classes in nursing, lectures, Boy Scout meetings, motion-picture entertainments, and a daily vacation Bible school.

"We give the people what they want, but we try to make them want the best. Now as for me, I don't really care for hold-up pictures of Bill Hart; but some of my people do. Therefore, now and then we have a Hart picture. A committee censors every film and, needless to say, we try to keep the quality high."

Our visit is interrupted here by a couple of young men who have just arrived in the village with a load of broilers, not for the pastor, but for shipping to the city market. The Reverend Mr. Christensen leaves us and has a few words with them in the adjoining club

room. As he returns, he asks us to excuse him; these men have stopped to work with him on the tennis court.

"The grading, surfacing, and rolling require much money and labor," he says. "Not having much money, we have waited to get volunteer labor. I work with any or all who come. These boys have come from the farthest end of the valley. Only one eighth of the valley's population of two thousand lives in this village. Ours is not a village church. Our parish includes the entire valley.

"We shall always make slow headway in a community where the saloons laid the foundation for us. We are not having an easy time, but we are stronger than we ever were before. This tennis court will help."

On our way out, as we walk through the auditorium in front of the stage, the pastor tells us about his dramatic club of sixty members that meets here every Wednesday night. We take a last look at the furniture and fixtures and get a new idea of the extent to which this church has built itself into the entire community life, instead of being merely one institution among the others.

"The masonic club gave us this curtain," he says. "They also furnished this ladies' rest-room. The school teachers put in this mirror. These andirons, the books, this punch bowl, and the wicker chair were each given by some organization. You see this is run by a community council of ten, on which are representatives from all the organizations in the valley. Two Roman Catholics are on it. Among the early settlers in the valley were some Portuguese, so we have one Portuguese on our Community Council. We want the church

to be at the very heart of all community life, instead of just on the outer extremity. We try to make the church and religion a part of every organization here, instead of being just one separate organization. The chamber of commerce met here last night and planned some printing on envelopes and folders. They are putting a picture of this parish house in the center of their printed matter."

"Do you ever get discouraged in this job?" we ask as we take our leave.

"Well, I fear I'm discouraged right now," he says. "A church back East in a wealthy suburban town had taken us as their special home missionary project. We have just received notification from them that they do not intend to help us any longer.

"They write us that we have done so well and are so near to self-support that the work here does not appeal so strongly to their givers as a more struggling field. This looks to me as though they are saying that, having fought through the campaign, and since now we are about to fight the decisive battle and win the war, the situation is less interesting to them than if we were not succeeding. I am not satisfied with just fighting, but I like to accomplish something. We are now reaching the people, but we have not yet established the work by enlisting and training a sufficient number to carry it on successfully. That time, however, is not far off. I wonder why churches that are simply struggling along appeal more to people who give to home missions than do churches which win out."

As we take our leave and turn our faces eastward, we still see the pastor standing there on his tennis court,

leaning on his shovel, and with that puzzled look on his face. And yet we, too, like that wealthy church back East, have thought home missions consisted in keeping alive numerous small, struggling churches, rather than in building here and there fine religious programs, such as this Novato church is trying to establish in this valley on the West Coast.

From this visit we learn the value to a church of having a field alone, without competition of other denominations. It would be almost impossible for this pastor to do the community work he is doing if another church also occupied the field.

The program of activities in the community house is winning the loyalty of what was before an indifferent neighborhood. The community house is interesting the non-church people. This church has had the constant help for the past six years of the Superintendent of the Country Church Department of the national board of missions of this denomination. Its success is largely the result of a national policy of one denomination for its rural churches, which subject was discussed in the preceding chapter. We also learn while studying this Novato field, that contrary to the more or less general belief, it is better to give generous support to fewer missionary projects in order thereby to build up strong successful centers, rather than to dole out funds in small allotments to many small struggling competitive churches.

Our eastbound train travels northward for two days before it begins to climb the Rockies. As we circle those coastal mountains, little valleys of fertile fruit-

land nestle at our feet, while up the mountainside the lone lumberjacks are preparing the way for the slowly advancing army of agriculture. We learn that these camps are visited regularly by some sky pilot, who, with knapsack and Bible, is cruising for soul timber among the humanity of the lumber industry. The next two days we cross those northern plateaus, dotted here and there with the pioneer-type of church, until finally we reach the most difficult field for religious work along our entire journey, a rural industrial community.

We enter the upper peninsula of Michigan amid desolate, chopped-over, burnt-over hills whose one-time great pine forests have been reduced, until now only the blackened stumps point upward, like witches' fingers, against the horizon. We stop at Caspian, a small insignificant mining village of 2,100 souls. From the names on the store fronts along the main street, we note that it is indeed a foreign city, tucked away in this isolated, bleak hill country. The names are Croatian, Italian, Polish, Swedish, Magyar, Bulgarian, Carniolan, Slovene, French, and Hebrew. What can a church do in the midst of so many handicaps of race, creed, monotonous industry, and southern European standards of moral and civic life?

Our attention is attracted, as we walk along the street past a neat house set well back from the sidewalk, by the sound of children singing. The words float cheerily out into the village street:

> America! America!
> May God thy gold refine,
> Till all success be nobleness,
> And every gain divine!

We approach the story-and-a-half stucco building from whence this music comes, and find it is the Caspian Community House. It is the girls' glee club that we have heard rehearsing. On the stage at the end of the auditorium, fifty girls are practising for a patriotic pageant. Blonde girls from Sweden and Norway, strong-featured Polish girls, dark-haired and black-eyed Italians, strange-looking Finnish girls, and girls from a dozen other nationalities and races are mingling their voices together. What can these words they are singing with such spontaneous enthusiasm mean to such a polyglot group!

> America! America!
> God shed His grace on thee,
> And crown thy good with brotherhood
> From sea to shining sea!

The young lady who is directing the rehearsal apologizes for not being able to stop, but hands us a copy of the printed program of the pageant these young people are rehearsing. Numerous races and creeds are represented in the cast of characters! We begin with the orchestra and read the names of the first violinists—Peter Talarico, Harry Lindstrom, Joseph Stephonsky, Arthur Anderson, and Vienna Knijvela. Similar names follow on through the program indicating the presence of a score of nationalities. In the column beside the cast of characters, is printed the following extract from the last speech of our great American, Theodore Roosevelt, written on January 5, 1919, the night before he died:

There can be no divided allegiance here. Any man who says he is an American, but something else also, isn't American at all. We have room for but one flag, the American flag. We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans, of American nationality, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boarding-house; and we have room for but one soul loyalty, and that is loyalty to the American people.

And so the church is this crucible, is it, that is to blend the many loyalties of our polyglot neighborhoods? And this Community House, built and supported by a home mission board, is the place where this racial blend is being made in this mining village?

Mr. Walter M. Berry, who is in charge, we learn is busy with more than fifty Boy Scouts downstairs in the gymnasium, so we wander around the building without a guide. Just off the auditorium is the social room, which we enter to watch a small group of mothers who seem to be gathering for a meeting. Among the thirty or more who come, some wear lace shawls of Sicilian make and others are dressed in the latest American modes.

"Is this the meeting of the Neighborhood House Club?" we ask.

"This is only one of our clubs," replies a polite young Italian woman. "We have in the house twenty-four clubs altogether. Most of them are for children and young people. This is our mothers' club."

"What are some of the things your mothers' club does?" we inquire.

"The last thing we did was to give a benefit play. We earned $132.48 when we gave it here in Caspian. More than half the cast were never in a play before.

They all did so well, we decided to give it away from home. So we gave it at the Gaastra village hall. There we cleared $63.46."

"What did you do with all of your money?"

"We gave half of the money we made here to our Community House, and half to the ladies' guild of St. Cecilia's Roman Catholic Church. At Gaastra we divided the proceeds between the Protestant Church there and our Community House here. The whole town seemed to feel happy when we gave our money equally to the Catholic and Protestant churches. This house is Protestant, but as the name shows, it is used by people of every race and religion."

"Do you find it easy to get the Protestants and the Catholics to cooperate?" we ask our intelligent young hostess, who, we learn, is an officer of this mothers' club.

"Oh, yes, for we always unite to do something. It was easy for us to unite last winter when the epidemics of mumps and of measles were with us. When we heard that a certain new family was sick and in need of food and care, we had no trouble uniting then. We are all interested in our children. All the clubs but one in this Community House are for our children or young people."

It is time for the mothers' club to be called to order, so we wander down the center hall to the library. By this time the Boy Scouts have adjourned and we strike up a conversation with a boy in the hall, who tells us his name is Emil Kezerle.

"What is your nationality?" we ask.

"American," he replies curtly.

"What does your father do?"

"He works."

"Why do you come here?"

"'Cause all the other boys do."

Soon he begins to explain a little. "I belong to the Scouts. Used to belong to the Junior Rangers till I got big enough to be a Scout. Hope I'll never join that Cloverland Club," he says, pointing to a group of boys and girls older than he, who are just entering a club room farther down the hall.

"Why?" I ask.

"Oh, girls belong to it! All they have done in that club so far is to have banquets and parties! We play games and study about how to be good citizens. Our Scout basket-ball team won the county championship. We licked eight of the best teams in this whole county."

By this time an older boy has come up to listen, so we ask him if he belongs to the Cloverland Club about which we have just heard.

"No, I belong to the Athletic Club!" he says with considerable pride. "Here's the aim of our club," and he hands us a card on which are written the words:

OUR AIM

1. To get a better idea of citizenship
2. To build the habit of thrift
3. All members must be trustworthy
4. All members should take a bath once a week.

Our attention is attracted suddenly by a group of girls coming out of the library with books under their arms. They allow us to look at these books, which they

have borrowed to take home to read. We find that they have been donated to the Community House by church groups, schools, and individuals of many creeds, in a dozen different states. The first book came from Upper Montclair, New Jersey; the second from a church in Wooster, Ohio; the third from Erie, Pennsylvania.

We ask the girls what they like best of all about the Community House. We take this way to find out about the work which is being done here. The first girl, Celia Panarrotto, says, "I like the sewing club the best. We girls learn how to make all our own clothes. No other club teaches that. This year, ninety girls made their own dresses, entirely by hand, too!"

"Oh, I like the story-hour much the best," says Kate Kruzich. "The stories are all about good and great people. We had over a hundred boys and girls present last Saturday."

"I don't care if we don't have a hundred Girl Scouts," interjects Diana Vidovich, a thirteen-year-old Serbian, the troop drummer, "we have almost twice as many Girl Scouts as there are Boy Scouts. And we had a real banquet and our mothers came, and the boys didn't have anything like that."

The next thing we know, they are in the midst of an argument as to which club has the largest attendance at its meetings, and we are all led over to the bulletin board in the hall, where each loyal member is to prove that his or her club is the best. What an array of activities we see here! A sordid mining and lumbering village of only 2,100 people, handicapped by differences in race, language, and religion; a polyglot community with all the misunderstandings and prejudices

that result when thirty-nine nationalities and ten religious faiths are thrown together constantly, and yet the soul of the place—its aspirations, its attitudes, and its activities—is being guided by a small Protestant mission plant!

This is the list of clubs and organizations, as well as the total attendance for four consecutive months of the past year, which some of our group copy:

The Story Hour	1,783	Shower and Tub Baths	1,536
Rehearsals	1,750	Mayflower Club	363
Socials and Parties	2,277	Games and Gymnasium	4,286
The Sewing Club	363	Attendance in the Social Room	4,806
Attendance in the Library	4,564	Mothers' Club	220
The Knights of Honor	165	Willing Workers	333
The Orchestra	71	The Skating Rink	10,989
Helpful Club	266	Glee Club	517
Boy Scouts	583	Plays	802
Girl Scouts	1,339	Pageants	270
Cloverland Club	464	Athletic Club	170
Rummage Sales	422	Marble Tournament	58
Junior Rangers	255		

Four athletic organizations or activities had forty per cent of the attendance. Fourteen educational clubs or activities had thirty-four per cent of the attendance. Five social clubs had twenty-one per cent of the attendance. One organization dealing with health had five per cent of the attendance.

By this time the children were leaving for their homes, going back to use an old European language, but taking with them new Christian American ideals. Four young college girls are among the throng that crowds out through the hall. They ask us if they may show us around the Community House.

"No, we are not so much interested in the house," we reply, "or in what is going on here, but we should like to ask who carries on all this work."

"Two of us came from Alma College, at Alma, Michigan, and two from Carroll College, at Waukesha, Wisconsin, to help in the daily vacation Bible school," replies one of the girls.

"We are here for five weeks. In college, you know, we have so many courses and discussion groups about the immigrants and about the laboring classes, and about Americanization and poverty, and especially about what the church should do for these foreign-speaking people, that we four girls volunteered to spend a part of our vacation in this daily vacation Bible school. Living and working with these people is so very much more interesting and more satisfactory than just discussing them back in college. Why, we have 232 boys and 192 girls in our daily vacation Bible school! Think of that! Mr. Berry is in charge of all the Community Center service and can tell you all about it." Then this busy man is called, and begins to answer our questions about what he considers the aim or purpose of this kind of social program.

"Although 76,000 persons were included in our counted attendance at all activities during the year," he explains, "yet we prefer to have our results measured in terms of individual character and leadership development.

"In a community like this, it seems that we must always look after the crowds to a certain extent, as there is no other place for them to go, that is, no other place where they will be assured of a decent, whole-

some environment. In addition to handling the individual, we can be most useful in projecting a good influence into these groups if they meet under our general supervision."

"How can you take care of so many groups?" we inquire.

"My principal task," he says, "is finding and training leaders. We have twenty-four volunteer adult leaders, eight men and sixteen women, who serve in a regular capacity throughout the year. For this four-weeks' daily vacation Bible school, we have thirty-six volunteer workers, thirty of them from our own village here. Besides, there are many agencies with which we can cooperate that were not in existence ten years ago. The County Home Demonstration Agent takes entire charge of many of our women's meetings, and teaches sewing, cooking, and home-making subjects. The county Young Men's Christian Association secretary helps us with our games at times. The township supervisor of music trains our glee club. The visiting nurse employed by the mining company gives the health and first aid instruction. The principal of the school cares for our Boy Scouts."

Someone asks this man, with all his service idealism, if such work as this commands a good salary.

Instead of being embarrassed by such a question, he seems most eager to reply.

"You see that deer head on the wall? That is part of my pay!"

"Did you capture that up here in the woods?" we ask.

"No, but I captured John Pedronsen, the man who

gave that to me. When his enmity was changed into friendship, I got my pay. John was seldom sober. On the night of our father-and-son banquet, I took one of his boys, and he brought the other. It was the first time he had been in a church in eighteen months, that is, since his daughter's funeral. John is allowing his children to attend Sunday school now.

"I proposed to the Verona Men's Club that they send a boy to the Upper Peninsula Y.M.C.A. Older Boys' Conference. They sent four instead of one, and other Caspian friends sent two more. The boys had a wonderful time; never missed a session during the three days! When four of them made personal Christian life decisions, I felt repaid for all I had done.

"This work gets the coming generation and starts them on the road to decent Christian citizenship, and holds them there," he says.

It is now past ten o'clock at night. The house is usually open from 9:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. It is time for us to leave, but our host asks us if we'll try his radio. He tunes in on Schenectady, Chicago, Fort Worth, and New York City. While sitting in the library we casually finger over the magazines on the table. *The Saturday Evening Post* and *The Ladies' Home Journal* we find were sent there by a church in New Jersey. *The Christian Herald* and *The Woman's Home Companion* are the gifts of Pennsylvania friends. *The Youth's Companion, The American Boy,* and *Boys' Life* came from some church in Battle Creek, Michigan. Sixty churches and other groups in scattered states, had shared their thoughts and gifts with the children of this sordid mining community. Religion,

like that radio, reaches across the continent, and helps us to "tune in" on the people of countless villages like this one in the heart of the mines and lumber camps of upper Michigan.

From this visit we learn how a church in a small polyglot community, where there are thirty-nine different nationalities and ten separate religious faiths, can meet great human needs, as Jesus said, "that they all may be one, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me."

A CHALLENGE

We must stop here to ask ourselves the question, What does this study mean to each one of us personally? Have we a sympathetic attitude towards rural folk? What do we care about their church problems? Am I myself willing to do my part to help make the countryside of America Christian?

There are many perplexing questions that are tugging at the minds and hearts of our rural population today, problems of economic stress and strain. Am I willing to throw myself whole-heartedly into the task of lightening these economic burdens? Big agricultural movements are arising which may become selfish and sordid or may be made a blessing to the nation as a whole, depending upon whether or not their policies are shaped by Christian principles of service. Will I accept my responsibility in these agricultural movements of today?

There are many new social problems now being thrust upon the rural population by commercial agen-

cies and modern transportation facilities. Such questions need the regenerating influence of Christian leadership. Country life is in a state of transition. Social standards and customs are changing. Youth is leaving the moorings of yesterday. The simple truths of personal salvation are confused. Social leaders are needed with joyful hearts and with Christian zeal, who know the paths of simple righteousness, who will shape these new social policies.

Like the Master who was learned in the religious history of his day and sympathetic with its traditions, but preached and taught a new message for a new day; so will I whole-heartedly love and cherish my church, but I, too, will seek to discover new ways of Christianizing modern rural life, its homes, its health, its social pleasures, its government, and its public opinion, that the Kingdom of Heaven may come into all our community life.

As Jesus gathered together a group of men with like purposes to go with Him on his tours of mercy and instruction, so will I endeavor to get groups in my church to join me in extending the Kingdom of God in the rural homes, in the schoolhouses, and in the isolated districts. In the name of Him who went among his Galilean neighbors carrying the gospel of love and service, so will I find a way to serve Him among the people of the countryside, in the regions round about my town and my church.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

A program for the rural church can well be built out of the common elements of success found in these and other similar churches.

Each one of these churches has in the forefront of its program the spiritual transformation of its people. Winning souls into the Kingdom is their primary task.

Each church has behind it some strong city church which is interested in its success and is rendering needed help. This help is more than financial, it is an intelligent sympathy with the problems which are found in these rural parishes.

The parishes in each case are large enough to challenge the services of capable workers.

The buildings and equipment, though inadequate at first, have been improved until now a church sanctuary has been built which has a worshipful atmosphere; and there are in each case rooms set apart for social programs and graded religious instruction.

Each church takes an intelligent and active interest in the economic prosperity of its people.

The workers in the church cooperate with the state and county agencies which are engaged in the field of social welfare, thus helping to make the tax-supported institutions agencies for righteousness.

The workers in these fields, both men and women, have received specialized training for their task, and have gladly given themselves to lives of service in rural fields in the name of Him who said, "Inasmuch as ye have done this unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me."

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